

Luke 2:8-17 – Hear, See, Speak of Jesus

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: When Israel and Syria formed an alliance against Judah, God asked Jehoahaz, king of Judah, if he wanted a sign to show his promise to provide for, protect, and propagate Judah throughout the world. **God wanted to assure him that Israel and Syria (their enemies) were no reason to worry**, and God would continue the Line of Promise so Jesus would come and bring even greater blessings to Judah in the future. But Jehoahaz said “no.” He bluntly refused God’s sign of assurance! How insulting that was to God! **So God said he would give Ahaz a sign anyway** – though he would never see it. In fact, he only ruled for 3 months and was taken as a prisoner to Egypt and he died there! The shepherds, on the other hand, received God’s signs and benefited from it. **You will hear about this today.**

Our headings are:

The Shepherds Heard of the Sign

The Shepherds Saw the Sign

The Shepherd Spoke of the Sign

Our goals are: That you will **receive not just the sign, but the reality of Christ’s birth**, that you will **accept the benefits of Christ’s work**, and that you will **then announce his work for mankind so others can receive its benefits.**

Shepherds Heard of the Sign

8 Now there were **in the same country shepherds living out in the fields**, keeping **watch over their flock by night.**

1. It was not uncommon for shepherds to be in the fields at night.

They often traveled long distances to find pasture for their sheep. Sometimes they were gone for months. (Being in the open fields is consistent with historical tradition that Christ was born around October; shepherds would not have their sheep out in the fields in December at night.)

This place was just outside of Bethlehem where Jesus’ father, David, kept his father’s sheep 1000 years before. So it was appropriate for David’s Son to come there to save his Father’s spiritual sheep.

2. On this night nothing seemed extraordinary.

Ordinary shepherds may have had their regular supper; those on watch-duty assumed their positions, hoping that no wild animal would attack their sheep. There were no dancing girls as in king’s palaces. There was no lavish meal. There was no well-robed council of the Sanhedrin. **God just took ordinary men to reveal a glorious sign!**

But why show the sign to shepherds? Shepherds were ordinary men who tended to be more trusting of God. Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David were shepherds. Later **God would continue to use ordinary men**...men who were willing to be taught. Didn’t God reject Saul for ordinary David? Furthermore, **shepherds had commitment to their task – to their sheep.** Sheep were totally dependent on the shepherds – they had to be! **Sheep could easily stray and get lost without the shepherds.**

9 And behold, **an angel** of the Lord stood before them, and the **glory of the Lord shone** around them, and **they were greatly afraid**.

3. Suddenly an angel of God, accompanied with an extremely great light, appeared to the shepherds.

The shepherds might have recognized this person as an angel because he likely descended in front of their eyes. The angel, along with the bright light **would have convinced the shepherds that something extraordinary was happening.**

2. These ordinary men -shepherds– seeing an extraordinary thing –became afraid.

A bright light by itself doesn't make one afraid. **It was what they knew – that this was a light from God – accompanied by this angel who came down from God...that's why they were afraid. They realized their sins!**

10 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**.

3. Knowing they were afraid, the angels comforted them by giving them the good news.

What was the Good News? **Bright light always brings joy after darkness!** He did not promise them that they would make a killing in the stock market, or be healthy, or their flocks would thrive. He promised much greater things. **He promised them Good News that would bring them joy.** He **promised them salvation!** Salvation would bring them joy!

4. This sign was good for all kinds of people, from all parts of the earth (Ps 2, 72,110), but not to every single person.

11 "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a **Savior**, who is **Christ the Lord**.

5. Consider the details of the Good News – the light that destroys spiritual darkness.

a. Jesus (Jehovah saves) the Savior is born– the one who would save them from their sins.

b. Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the one specially set aside by the Father to come and die for sinners, of whom the Jews

frequently sang in the Psalms. Messiah would be their prophet, priest and king. The true Shepherd of Israel.

c. Jesus is the Lord – the supreme Redeemer who redeemed his children and keeps them safe from the Sneaky Snake.

This Savior would be David's Son.

12 "And **this will be the sign to you:** You will find a Babe wrapped in **swaddling cloths,** lying **in a manger.**"

6. This Jesus, they were told, would be found in a lowly place, with lowly clothes.

No one could imagine a newborn (a firstborn at that) being placed in a feeding trough. This fact was important evidence – for if the God of all glory would **be born just as the angel**

said, in humble conditions, it would confirm the angel's words.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

7. To confirm the words of the angel (probably Gabriel), other angels appeared.

All Christians will see these many angels when Jesus returns at the end of the world. By their presence, the angels will confirm Jesus' coming...and show his glory.

14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

8. The angels all sang together: "Glory to God in the highest" proclaiming an established fact.

Jesus had come to do the work of rescuing man from sin. There was no uncertainty of the action as they sang it in unison.

More, the angels sang: "On earth peace, goodwill toward men." This showed the end result of the work of Jesus. Eternal enemies can have peace - inward peace. Israel was already peaceful at this time.

Micah 5:5 And this One shall be peace.

Ephesians 2:14 For He Himself is our peace

9. The angelic language suggested that the work that brings peace had been completed, showing certainty.

"Jesus is here...you have peace." Man is totally unable and unwilling to make peace with God. He can't approach God-he won't approach God. All the good man has is owing to God's good-will.

10. Lessons:

a. Humble men are more likely to receive the Gospel. The rich and haughty often reject the Gospel. That's just a fact.

King Ahaz refused God's sign. The Jewish religious leaders: the Pharisee, the Sadducees, and Scribes refused God's sign, so they lost the benefit!

Matthew 12:39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

b. Jesus had to come in such an unassuming way – with no pomp and ceremony, to be a regular man without the great privileges of the wealthy. If he were not an ordinary man he would not be fit to die for the sins of the world.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

c. When the light of the Gospel shines on you, you see God's holiness and you see your sins. Read the Gospel often.

d. This bright light represented the Good News of Jesus Christ that would open the eyes of those in darkness. Jesus: "I am the light of the world."

e. Because you have the comfort of peace, God must have the glory of peace. Work for him. Worship him.

Shepherds Saw the Sign

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."

1. There was an immediate impression made on these ordinary shepherds that they wanted to see this sign.

So as soon as the angels left, they went to see the sign. Yes, these shepherds were ordinary men in society, but they were men of faith, and hearing the words, there must have been a click in the eyes of their minds, a light turned on. "We've got to see it!" **This was the Light to the Jews** and Gentiles about which Isaiah wrote."

Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. **3** The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. **19** "The sun shall no longer be your light by day, Nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; But the LORD will be to you an everlasting light, And your God your glory. **20** Your sun shall no longer go down, Nor shall your moon withdraw itself; For the LORD will be your everlasting light, And the days of your mourning shall be ended.

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

2. So they hurriedly went out looking for the reality of the sign, the Lord Jesus, in order to strengthen their faith, unlike Ahaz.

There they saw the Christ-Child, lying in a manger.

3. What were the results of seeing the Christ-Child just as the angels said?

a. Seeing the young virgin...with her first child...in that cold, dark cave...and a baby in a manger, they must have been elated to find that the Good News was true.

b. This verification of what the angels said would have strengthened their faith in Jehovah.

4. Lessons:

a. You see the signs of Jesus in baptism and the Lord's Supper, but more, you see the reality of the sign in the work of Jesus Christ in your heart! Look forward to preaching and the sacraments.

b. When you do these things your faith will be strengthened, fear will disappear, and boldness will take over! You will want to tell others this Good News so they can have soul-comfort! You won't be ashamed.

Shepherds Spoke of the Sign

17 Now **when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying** which was told them concerning this Child.

1 Seeing God's Word proved and their faith strengthened, the shepherds took God's Good News throughout the land.

This was really man's Good News.

2. They did not add or subtract from what they saw; they couldn't, as it was a life giving message.

3. Lessons:

a. As the under-shepherds of the Lord, you must now proclaim what you have heard, seen, and experienced! You have to preach and support the preaching of Christ. Preaching shows and proves God's faithfulness by words and wonders. But before you can preach, you must listen with care! **Train yourself to recognize God's Word** when it is preached. Let the Sacraments speak. This will strengthen your faith. **When people have sight they will lead the blind.** They will lead the blind to the one who gives sight. **Spiritual morsels ought not to be eaten alone.** God's food must never end with you. Don't be selfish!

b. Christmas is not a date. Christmas is not even a celebration. Christmas is a message. Let it speak clearly to you. You speak it clearly to others. You must do it better than the shepherds. Why? You not only have the sign, you also have seen the thing signified by the sign: Jesus lived, died, and rose again.

Conclusion:

It must have been quite an experience for those ordinary shepherds in the fields when the angels appeared! But while they were afraid – probably stunned by the appearance of these heavenly beings and while they might have been overwhelmed by their sin – **they were not overwhelmed by the sign.** They learned that **man would have peace with God** through Jesus, **that that would bring joy** to their hearts, and that **this peace was for all peoples.** So the shepherds left their animals and went with joy to see this God-child. **But that incredible event did not end with seeing the Christ-child.** No, **they went about the land telling the Jews that their Messiah had come** – just as God had said before – in Bethlehem – from Jesse – from David – to save the world. They experienced the sign of the joy of Jesus and wanted to tell the world.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Now that you know and have personally met Jesus, remain in that comfort that the Son has saved you from your raving enemy – Satan – who made you an enemy of God.

2. Kneel and bow down before you Savior! Yes, wise men still seek him! Yes, wise men still kneel before him.

3. Tell the world the Good News so they may be protected and share the joy and comfort that you have. So yes, you should announce the Advent of Christ...loudly.

4. Tell the Good News by your words and your life. Go tell it on the mountains and tell it at the supermarket!

Finally, if you are not a Christian, here is Good News. Jesus has come to die for sinners. He came – in all humanity and humility – for your sakes. Receive him into your soul today...and you will receive his peace...a peace that lasts forever...