

Throughout our years we have heard, seen or listened to the Biblical account of the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem. They traveled to Bethlehem because Caesar Augustus had declared that each person should travel to their town of origin to register in a census, to insure that all citizens were correctly paying their taxes. Bethlehem was Joseph's family village. Lets pick up the story starting with the prophecy given in the Old testament book of Micah

ESV Micah 5:2 But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

- ***lets pick up the story... Every 15 years or so the Romans took a census of the people to determine the tax rolls..***

ESV^{LK 2:} 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed,^[b] who was with child.

- **Joseph and pregnant Mary are in Bethlehem...signing up for the census...**

6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

- **they needed different lodging went to the Inn...it is full ...so they head toward Jerusalem a city far bigger...about six miles away...to find better accommodations.**

- **There must have come a moment on that road, they realized Mary could not go farther....**
- **Apparently** The best accommodations they can find is **the Tower of the Flock** the only protective structure available on the long road through the fields of sheep between the two cities.
- **We know this as it to was This was prophesied by Micah...**
- *Micah 4: ⁸ And you, O tower of the flock, hill of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, the former dominion shall come, kingship for the daughter of Jerusalem. ESV*
- **In Hebrew, the name of the tower is “Migdal Eder.” Pronounced MigDol Ader**
- **Migdal Eder, the name means “watchtower of the flock” which seems to identify a specific pasture area for sheep. And the sheep that grazed here were those specifically destined for Temple sacrifice. located close to the road between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.**
- *******Show pictures tower and manger**

Back story The fields around Bethlehem were valuable grazing lands. The Priestly Shepherds watched over this special field

- **When the ewes were ready to deliver, the shepherds moved them inside to give birth and protect the babies by placing them tightly bound I swaddling cloths in a manger**
- **The tower was a lookout for watching over the sheep....**
- **The ground floor, is designated for the delivery and protection of these special male lambs.**

- **So When the mother ewe was preparing to give birth, she was taken to one of these special birth places, to give birth to the sacrificial lambs.**
- **This cave was kept as sterile and clean as possible for the arrival of newborn sacrificial lambs.**
- **The ewes delivered in a clean environment (as specified by Rabbinic regulations for these special temple animals) and their lambs were sorted and immediately inspected for ‘spot or blemish.’**
- **Clean cloths wiped down the lambs, after which they were wrapped in clean swaddling cloths as previously delivered by the priest from Jerusalem, to protect them and keep them from bruising themselves and danger.**
- **Swaddling clothes described in the Bible consisted of a cloth tied together by bandage-like strips.**
- **It was in this special ‘manger,’ in the Migdal Eder, that Jesus was born after Mary and Joseph could not find other lodging.**
- **Imagine The thrill of a baby and the dissapointment in their circumstances....typical emotions when following God...thrill and disappointment at the circumstances**
*******Meanwhile....**

NLT Luke 2 :8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.

- **Near Eastern shepherding in general...is one of the most demanding and least appreciated and rewarded tasks in that first- century culture.**

- shepherds lived most of the year outside, away from the townspeople.
- Flocks were kept outdoors from April to November, and, sometimes during the winter in suitable locations. **Sheep are defenseless and therefore easily frightened...and not particularly bright animals.** And will always impulsively react before they think.
- Sheep are also vulnerable to a wide variety of diseases, ticks, insects and parasitic afflictions. Consequently, sheep require constant attention and care. Shepherding is a “hands on” calling. **You can’t shepherd from a distance.**
- **Nightly protected encampments were necessary to do guard duty."** protecting the sheep from lions, bears, wolves, and thieves.
- *******This is where it gets different....these were not your ordinary shepherds....**
- **These shepherds were extraordinary shepherds. They were called “Levitical Shepherds”. They had been chosen and trained to attend the flock of sheep that were to be used as sacrificial lambs in the Temple. Sacrificial lambs had to be “spotless and without blemish.”**
- **According to the laws of the time, the sheep that were used for the offerings had to be a one-year-old male sheep that had been outside for 365 days (one year). When they were ready, they were taken to Jerusalem to be sacrificed on the Sabbath in the Temple.**

- **So Picture this One minute the shepherds are talking quietly in the blackness of the Spring sky. The next moment the hillside is ablaze in light with an angel standing in front of them...**

Luke 2: ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

- **The Glory or Radiance of the Lord was physical as in burning bright light and emotional... the overwhelming feeling of the presence of God...**
- **When the shepherds saw this intense bright light and felt the presence of the divine... and someone standing there who was not there a second ago... they were terrified...**

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

- **The angel utters the words that Jews had longed for centuries to hear -- " Christ the Lord is born...and for all people///plural!!."**
- **And This good news was for them! for the angel said you! And he is not far away..you will know where to look...**

Luke 2: ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

- **The Messiah, the sacrificial Lamb of God would be born in the same place all unspotted lambs designated for Temple sacrifice were born Hwe will be in the manager wrapped in swaddling cloths...**

But wait there's more...Then we go from one angel ...to a great company...thousands...

Luke 2: 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

- **His favor.. good news for all people is a savior...whom God is pleased to give...bringing peace between God and humanity**
- **not sure how long the angels sang and praised...but when they were done...lets go...**

LK 2: 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”

- **Whenever God speaks to us there is always something to do with it!... they had a choice..Go back to warming themselves by the fire...or look for the King**
- **So they headed back toward Bethlehem... to the tower of the flock**

*LK 2: 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them....after they found it.. they told Mary and Joseph what happened.... **Meanwhile while she is***

worn out from child birth...looks like a hot mess and her babe in a manger!

- Mary stored away all this info in her heart, adding it to the other information she has been given and
- **pondered** means to think about often, trying to put together what it all means...and why it has happened the way it has cause it does not make sense .
- **Thinking about how and why God does or allows things is hard work, which is why many of us never get around to it. And yet this is the perfect time of the year to do it.**
- **Good for us to ponder what God has said, what he has allowed and what is this supposed to teach me**
- **When the shepherds leave ...they tell everyone they see what they saw...they can't help themselves!**
- **They had been transformed by this experience...forever inwardly ...yet outwardly nothing changed...**

The shepherds went back to shepherding... Joseph would develop his carpentry business ...life would carry on... yet everything inside them changed... they now carry the good news of Christ! ...it is for everybody to be saved !! so their future was secure and amazing!

It is God's Christmas gift to us!!! Jesus is our Blessing

Song The Blessing

end

end

He has given us His favor and Peace ...Saving us it is His blessing!!!
End Song The Blessing

- **A manager wrapped in swaddling cloths... a cloth wrapped around the baby tied together with strips of cloth ... like a first born male sheep designated for the sacrifice for the peoples sins...**

... The God of all creation first announces his birth to a group of men, who live on the outskirts of society.

- **In Hebrew, the name of the tower is “Migdal Eder.” Pronounced MigDol Ader**

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- **Picture this ...They have just settled in ...Joseph spreading blankets on the straw...Mary trying to find a comfortable position ...And oh great her water breaks....she goes into labor...for how long only she and Joseph know... *in a Completely Unsterile environment...Joseph is the mid-husband... The baby is put in Swadling cloths in the manger and Mary was cleaning up herself after having just gone through labor and delivery...***

The thrill of a baby and the dissapoinment in their circumstances while at the same time