

The Shepherds and The Lamb of God

There is an amazing **midnight** Bible story found in LUKE 2, which is quite different than most of the **midnight** Bible stories we have examined so far in this study. Up until this point we have looked at a few **midnight** Bible stories of how the Lord delivered some worthies of faith out of troublesome times that they faced in the darkest hours of their lives. And truly “the darkest of times brought forth the heroes of faith.” This **midnight** Bible story found in LUKE 2 reveals one the most encouraging events recorded in scripture, which is the birth of the Lamb of God, and His introduction to the shepherds. This is one of the unique stories of Luke, that faithful follower of the Apostle Paul, who also followed Christ as he was taught by Paul, and by doing so Luke witnessed, and was told some incredible stories that no other writer of scripture could reveal. Luke’s writings include The Gospel According to LUKE, the book of ACTS.

A quick background of why Luke was able to record this amazing **midnight** Bible story that is found in LUKE 2 takes us back to ACTS 20 where we read in verse 5 and 6 that Luke traveled with Paul, and his company until they came to Jerusalem in ACTS 21. Luke was still with Paul when Paul traveled to Rome in ACTS 27 & 28. Luke was still with Paul in 2 TIMOTHY 4:11 where Paul wrote Timothy: *Only Luke is with me.* Stated another way, it seems from all accounts in scripture that Luke remained close by Paul’s side from the time he re-joined Paul and company back in ACTS 20:5 & 6. When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem in ACTS 21, and transported to Caesarea about seventy miles away a short time later, it seems that Luke spent much time in Jerusalem interviewing the Apostles, and Mary the mother of Jesus, piecing together the stories that are found in both ACTS, and the gospel of LUKE. There is no way Luke could have written about what Mary pondered in her heart in LUKE 2:19, or how she marveled at those things which we spoken of concerning Jesus in LUKE 2:33, or how she cast in her mind what kind of salutation Gabriel had given her in LUKE 1:28-30, or the sayings she was told concerning Jesus when He was 12 in LUKE 2:41-51 had not Mary personally told Luke about these things. As we know from studying ACTS 24:23 & 27 the Apostle Paul was held prisoner for two years at Caesarea, and allowed visitors of his acquaintance during that time. Luke was among his closest acquaintance, but as a free man Luke could travel the relative short distance between Caesarea and Jerusalem during these two years of Paul’s captivity, and interview the Kingdom Apostles, and Mary the mother of Jesus as he gathered the information that he wrote to Theophilus in Antioch, Syria that in time has become known to us as The Gospel According to LUKE, and the book of ACTS, two separate Holy Ghost inspired documents that are now part of scripture. So we find this amazing **midnight** Bible story that is found in LUKE 2 also comes from the information Luke got from interviewing Mary the mother of Jesus, who also was a part of this most wonderful **midnight** Bible story!

In LUKE 2:1-7 we find Mary and Joseph coming to Bethlehem the city of David where she gave birth to Jesus. LUKE 2:7 records: *And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.* Pause her for a moment and note that Luke is the only writer of scripture to note that Jesus was laid in a manger, that there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the inn, and that Mary wrapped baby Jesus in swaddling clothes. Again the reason that Luke could record this information was that Mary the mother of Jesus later in life told Luke these things, and he wrote them down.

Our **midnight** Bible story of the shepherds, and their interaction with the Lamb of God on the night of His birth is found in the next verses of LUKE 2. LUKE 2:8 *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 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, good will toward men.*

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

We entitled this chapter of our **midnight** Bible story's **The Shepherds and The Lamb of God** because the shepherds were the first among men outside of Mary and Joseph to witness Jesus here on earth! Ponder that thought own your own for a few minutes, and see where the Holy Ghost takes you. Consider why were the shepherds thus privileged? Have you ever thought about it? There are a multitude of good answers as to why the shepherds were the first privileged to witness the Lamb of God. These shepherds weren't highly looked upon by man, and spent their days and nights keeping watch over their flocks. These were lowly men, and humble men to whom God could reveal some profound truths unto. These shepherds were awake at night, and paying close attention to their sheep. Stated another way, they were watchful shepherds concerned for their sheep, and their little lambs. They loved their little lambs. These shepherds remain a testimony to us, for because they were awake at night, and watching, they got to be among the first to see, and be with Jesus, the Lamb of God, at His first coming. May we be like these humble shepherds, awake at night and watching, so that we will be in that first rank to see Jesus, and be with Jesus at His second coming. It would be thirty years before John the Baptist would proclaim "behold the Lamb of God" in JOHN 1:29 and 36. The shepherds got to "behold the Lamb of God" the night of His birth! And they were told in LUKE 2:11 *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And ...they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child..* according to LUKE 2:17. These shepherds were privileged to see Jesus first because God wanted them to be the first to announce facts about the arrival of the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

There were five tasks of a Near Eastern shepherd found in Strong's Concordance: (1) to watch for enemies trying to attack the sheep, (2) to defend the sheep from attackers: (3) to heal the wounded and sick sheep: (4) to find and save lost or trapped sheep: (5) to love them, sharing their lives, and so doing earning their trust. Perhaps this brings more meaning to the following statements concerning Jesus found in scripture: JOHN 10:11 *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* JOHN 10:14 *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* JOHN 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.* In HEBREWS 13:20 Paul makes this statement: *...our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep...* . And in ACTS 20:28 Paul makes this statement unto the Ephesian elders, who were in essence the keepers of the Ephesian sheep: *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

No doubt the reason the shepherds here in LUKE 2 were *...keeping watch over their flock by night...* was that it was lambing season, spring time in other words, and the beasts of prey would be out in force at the **midnight** hours during this time of year, for the new born lambs were an easy target. Also the shepherds often needed to help the sheep giving birth, and they would have shown the most tender care and compassion for these newborn lambs. No wonder God wanted them to be the first to witness the Lamb of God! No doubt also it was during the springtime when Jesus was born.

David, who also tended sheep in the hillsides near Bethlehem, told king Saul some of the hazards he faced while watching over the lambs. 1 SAMUEL 17:34 *And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear...* . That particular shepherd boy named David went on to become king of Israel,

and Jesus Christ was of the lineage of David as is noted in LUKE 2:4. The very sheep found in our **midnight** Bible story of LUKE 2 were descendants of David's sheep too. David had a lot to say about the Lord being his shepherd in the 23rd PSALM, and no doubt David learned much from watching over his fathers flocks. I used to ask Brother Ernie Austin about sheep as he too watched sheep as a youth. He had some profound observations concerning sheep. Brother Ray Quintana also spent some time watching his fathers sheep while growing up, and told me one way to calm them down at night was to sing to them, or play some soft music, or speak to the sheep in calming tones. We read this of David's music in 1 SAMUEL 16:23 *And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.* No doubt the sheep David watched were the first audience to hear the sweet psalmist of Israel play his music, and hear his sweet singing unto the Lord during the dark **midnight** hours.

Again our shepherds in this **midnight** Bible story of LUKE 2 were awake, and watching their sheep when all of a sudden *...the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid...* LUKE 2:9. What would you do should the angel of the Lord come upon you, and the glory of the Lord shine round about you some dark **midnight**? No doubt all of us would be startled just like the shepherds in our **midnight** Bible story were. Their fear was only momentary however for in verses 10 through 12 we read: *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

Note the facts told the shepherds in this **midnight** Bible story. First they were to fear not. The words "fear not" are totally interchangeable with the phrase "be not afraid." Most often the words "fear not," and "be not afraid" are heavenly words of encouragement spoken to those who would be overcomers! The words "fear not," and "be not afraid" are the backbone of faith. These words "fear not," and "be not afraid" urge the hearer to move forward and become a full overcomer! Abraham before he was called Abraham was the first one recorded in scripture to hear the words "fear not," and it was the Lord who spoke these words to Abram in GENESIS 15:1. GENESIS 15:1 *After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.* Abraham is noted to be the father of those who also walk in the steps of faith as is noted in ROMANS 4:12. ROMANS 4:12 *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.* Abraham grasped the concept of "fear not" by faith, and went on to be highlighted more than another other individual in HEBREWS 11 where we have the record of the Old Testament worthies of faith. Abraham was also a shepherd for GENESIS 24:35 notes him to have flocks, and herds, the flocks pointing to sheep, and the herds being associated with cattle. Abraham was familiar with lambs, and made this prophetic statement of faith in GENESIS 22:8 unto his son Isaac: *...God will provide himself a lamb...* . What a profound portion of scripture. Again the shepherds of LUKE 2 we among the first to lay eyes upon the Lamb of God, and they did so on the night of His birth because they heeded the word of the angel of the Lord to "fear not." On your own check it out and find the phrase "fear not" associated with many of the Old Testament icons of faith, such as Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah just to mention a few. The angel of God also spoke the words "fear not" to Zacharias the father of John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus, Joseph, Mary's husband, and the Apostle Paul in ACTS 27:24. Again the words "fear not," and "be not afraid" are the backbone of faith. The words "fear not" can be found in 62 scriptures, and the phrase "be not afraid" is found mentioned 28 times in 26 verses. The number 28 points to ETERNAL LIFE, whom the Great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus gives us according to JOHN 10:28. The number 26 is associated with the GOSPEL, and the GOOD NEWS of the GOSPEL, which can be summed up in the words of 1 TIMOTHY 1:15 *...that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...* .

The second thing told the shepherds in this **midnight** Bible story was that they were to “behold” something according to LUKE 2:10 -- *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.* “Behold” is a word that we do not commonly use in today’s language, but it means to “call to attention to what may be seen or heard or apprehended in anyway.” this according to Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. In other words the shepherds were being told to hear something of major importance, and then to go see with their own eyes something of greater importance.

The third fact the angel of the Lord made known unto the shepherds in this **midnight** Bible story was that they were being brought good tidings of great joy, and these good tidings were to be to all people. Good tidings is a term used of any message designed to cheer those who receive it. Furthermore these good tidings were to be received with invigorating joy, that is the kind of joy of God’s preeminent blessings, which is better felt than told!

Fourth the angel of the Lord made known unto the shepherds in this **midnight** announcement that on this day was born in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. The object of this most joyful news ever announced was Jesus our Saviour, God’s amazing love manifest in the flesh! These shepherds were being privileged to be the first witnesses of seeing the Messiah, God’s promised Saviour by whom are all things, and in Him all things consist! They were not told that He is the Lamb of God, but He was, and the shepherds who were accustomed to giving tender care unto the little helpless lambs were told where to find Christ the Lord in Bethlehem. We are not told if these Shepherds of Bethlehem knew what the prophet ISAIAH wrote some 750 years earlier in ISAIAH 9:6 *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.* Perhaps they had heard this verse of scripture, nevertheless they were about to witness the most important child ever born.

Fifth, the shepherds in this **midnight** Bible story were given a sign, their road map as to where to find this Saviour, which is Christ the Lord; *...Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* Shepherds wouldn’t have any trouble finding this stable in Bethlehem, nor would they be embarrassed nor intimidated by coming to such a place having, no doubt, been there before with their sheep. They however probably had never seen a human baby just born in a stable. Please note that there wasn’t any mention of wise men from the east in our **midnight** Bible story, for that event would take place two years later when Jesus was a young child. On the day of His birth, Jesus, the creator of the universe, was an infant baby *...wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger...* experiencing the human love of his mother Mary, and Joseph, and the smells, and sounds of a stable.

The angel of the Lord telling these shepherds about the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord, was just the beginning of their adventure on this most wonderful **midnight**. We read what immediately happened next in LUKE 2:13 & 14 -- *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, good will toward men.* This multitude of heavenly host was angels as is told in LUKE 2:15. Of these angels HEBREWS 1:6 states: *And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.* Why were these angels so excited to pass this news on concerning Jesus in LUKE 2? Because they hadn’t seen him for nine months! I imagine that every angel in heaven silently stole a glimpse of baby Jesus as they passed back into heaven on that night. What a unique and grand sight these shepherds witnessed that same **midnight**. Note further in verse 13 that these angels were not singing, but rather “saying:” *...Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.* Nowhere in scripture will you find angels singing. The very same shepherds, who calmed down their sheep by singing, and saying soft words during dark **midnight** hours, were now themselves being calmed down by the angels praising God. This whole scene is hard to fathom, and only by faith can we appreciate what these shepherds witnessed on this particular **midnight**.

The shepherds understood the **midnight** revelation to be an invitation unto them to go unto the manger scene in Bethlehem, and witness what was told them. And how could they now not go there? LUKE 2:15 *And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*

Note two things from these verses. First, the shepherds came with haste to witness on the same night Jesus was born, the baby Jesus. The Holy Ghost had it recorded in scripture that they were there! Secondly, note that these very same shepherds didn't keep their silence about what they were shown that **midnight**, or what they had indeed witnessed, for ...*they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.* The word "abroad" means: to make known abroad, to publish abroad, to make known thoroughly. Did these very same shepherds really make known abroad these things they were shown? Yes, and verse 18 confirms this, stating: *And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.* Note also that these shepherds could not testify of Jesus without first for themselves having Christ revealed unto them.

Pastors are sometimes referred to as shepherds, but more correctly they are overseers of the sheep, much like a shepherd. They are to feed their little flocks. True Pastors always point their "sheep" too ...*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world...* JOHN 1:29. What did Jesus tell Peter in JOHN 21? Peter, who himself went on to become probably the greatest kingdom Apostle, was told three times by Jesus in JOHN 21 to "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," and again to "Feed my sheep." {See JOHN 21:15-17.} In other words Peter was instructed to be concerned for the sheep, and the little lambs. Back here in LUKE 2, what were these shepherds names? And how many shepherds were there? And how many sheep did they have? Note that this information is not given us, because the focus is not to be upon the shepherd, who he was, what he was wearing, what kind of books he read, or what kind of books he wrote, or how big was his flock; no, the focus for these shepherds was to be upon Jesus, and then to spread the good tidings of great joy, which shall be preached to all people, that there is a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord! Jesus should always be the center of attention, the focal point of all Pastors! LUKE 2:20 records the concluding thoughts in scripture about these shepherds in this **midnight** Bible story. LUKE 2:20 *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.* Our shepherds in this **midnight** Bible story are found ...*glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.* True God fearing Pastors, and teachers are to do the very same thing, that is to be found ...*glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.*

More Jesus, Mary and Joseph Midnight Bible Stories

This part of our **midnight** Bible stories study is an expansion of what we just studied about the shepherds and the Lamb of God. LUKE 2:19 and 20 reads: *But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.* In this section we will consider some of the things Mary, and Joseph too, were revealed in **midnight** settings about the most important personality who ever lived here upon the earth, and that being Jesus Christ the Lord, whom they were given the responsibility to raise in this world! Joseph and Mary knew from the shepherds that Jesus was "a Saviour," and also known as "Christ the Lord" as was noted in LUKE 2:11. Joseph and Mary also knew the following about Jesus.

Some nine months earlier in LUKE 1:31-33 the angel Gabriel told Mary: *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there*