

Christmas

First Christmas : The Shepherds

Foundation

Bible passage: Luke 2.8-19

Being a shepherd in Israel at the time of Jesus' birth wasn't a very promising career. You were unlikely to become rich, it meant a lot of time out in the fields sleeping rough and it could be dangerous because of wild animals and thieves. It is significant for two different reasons that it was some shepherds of Bethlehem were the first to be told the good news of Jesus' birth.

"A Saviour who is Christ the Lord"

Today if there is a royal birth the media go into overdrive and news channels around the world announce the news. In contrast the birth of Jesus went almost unnoticed by people at that time. The first people to hear the news were ordinary shepherds. Indeed, this aspect of His birth fits with others in its simplicity and lowliness. Nevertheless, while this birth was not noticed by many at that time on earth it was big news indeed in heaven as the heavenly host showed.

The shepherds may have been ordinary people, but it is also very significant that they were shepherds from Bethlehem. The angel announced

Christ the Lord

Christ, of course, is not the name of Jesus but a title given to Him. The Greek word *Christos* means "anointed" and translates the Hebrew *Messiah*. The title Lord can be used of all sorts of people but is also used in the New Testament when translating the proper name of God from the Old Testament.



to them, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

Bethlehem was where David had been a shepherd boy who anointed as King of Israel. Because of promises God had made through the prophets, people knew that a King would come one day who was of the line of David. This expected king was known as the Messiah. The angels were therefore announcing that the Messiah had come and yet not in the way that everyone expected.

The humility and simplicity of Jesus' birth show that this child was not going to be the sort of king everyone expected. Later this would be something the first disciples of Jesus struggled with, particularly when Jesus started to talk about His death. It was only after He had died and been raised again that they were finally able to understand that the King came to suffer and die. It would be by His death that Jesus would save His people from their sins, being the saviour that the angels had announced.

The shepherds went to see the child they had heard about and then wanted others to know too. In the same way Jesus' followers today want others to know about him.



Jesus birth was first announced to shepherds showing both the simplicity and wonder of His coming.