

Glory to God in the Highest

***Key Verse: “The
shepherds
returned,
glorifying and
praising God for
all the things that
they had heard
and seen, as it was
told unto them.”
—Luke 2:20***

***Selected Scripture:
Luke 2:8-20***

IN OUR LAST LESSON WE

concluded that the Christian celebration of December 25th as our Lord’s birth provides no real source of protest. We instead see that celebrating that day with rejoicing of heart and giving of gifts and remembrances one to another reflects the divine favor of God’s gift to mankind. It copies in a small measure the giving to us of our redemption through the gift of God’s only

begotten Son, “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

In announcing the arrival of mankind’s Savior, God sent an angel to shepherds who were tending their sheep in the field. These shepherds were common men of society who would tend to be more receptive to the message brought by God’s angel than those of might or nobility.

The shepherds’ initial reaction to the appearance of this angel was one of fear, which was a natural response of the flesh. How loving and reassuring were the first words of God’s messenger. “Fear not,” they were told. What a lesson it is for us to realize that the Word of God should not be received with any fear of heart, but in

assurance that his message is one of joy and hope. Indeed, as soon as the shepherds had been relieved of their fear, the angel declared the reason for his appearance: “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”—Luke 2:10,11

Here we see yet another important feature of God’s plan. The good tidings would be to all people. The phrase “good tidings” has the same meaning as the word translated “gospel” throughout the New Testament. The angel was announcing the promised gospel of Christ which was hidden until the proper time. Paul spoke concerning this: “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”—Rom. 16:25,26

God’s plan, once veiled in prophecy and dark sayings, was now revealed as good tidings to all through the birth of a Savior—Christ the Lord. To impress this grand message upon their minds so they would never lose the depth of its meaning, Luke describes what happened next, saying, “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”—Luke 2:13,14

As we try to imagine the magnitude and splendor of that heavenly choir singing of the coming peace on earth and good will toward men, we realize it was a prophecy. The past two thousand years have been reserved as a time when God has been calling out a people for his name. When that work is complete, we look forward to hearing all mankind join those shepherds in glorifying and praising God for the gift of their Savior, Christ the Lord. ■