

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB

Text: Luke 2:7-14, 22-35

Immediately after the birth of Christ in scripture, the scene shifts to a group of shepherds that were in the same region doing what shepherds do...watching over sheep. The angel of the Lord appears to them and reveals that the greatest event in all of history has just taken place. The angel says the most gracious statement ever heard “for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord”. And over two thousand years later, we comprehend that these are tidings of great joy and they have been to all people. For the crowd that says that the birth of Christ shouldn’t be celebrated...heaven celebrated it! **Luke 2:13-14** And 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.

Did you ever stop to ask yourself of all people to send angels to make this announcement to, why shepherds? Why not prophets or potentates? Everything God does has significance. These shepherds were watching over sheep that would be sacrificial law rituals for sin and uncleanness. The angel was letting them know that their job was just about over because the lamb of God had just been born. Mary had a little lamb.

- **Sacrificial lamb** – When Jesus was 30 years old and was seen of John the Baptist, John didn’t say “Hey cousin” he said, “Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”. Death is the penalty for sin, but God in his mercy allowed a substitute to stand in for and die in place of the guilty. The Old Testament is full of the blood of bulls and goats to cover sin, not take it away. On the day of atonement two goats were required for the ritual. One goat was offered for a sin offering and the other was called the scapegoat. It remained alive and was carried by a fit man into the wilderness to bear the sins of the people and turned loose in a land not inhabited. According to Jewish history, because the scapegoat bore the sins of the people, they wanted to take no chances of it wandering back to them...so the fit man would push the goat off a cliff with a scarlet ribbon tied around one of its horns. They also tied the same scarlet ribbon to the door of the temple. When the goat died the ribbon on the door of the temple would turn white, showing that their sins had been covered. Amazingly this phenomenon stopped happening when Jesus turned 30 years old and began his ministry. **Hebrews 10:4** For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. **Hebrews 10:12-14** But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of

God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

- **Son of God** – When Gabriel announced the conception and birth of the Lord to Mary this is how he described him **Luke 1:32-33** 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: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. It's important to note that before he was Jesus the Christ, in eternity past he was the Word. **John 1:1-2** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. **John 1:14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost and the Word became flesh in her womb. Joseph and Mary were both instructed before he was born that his name would be JESUS which means Jehovah saves. In a manger in Bethlehem the Word became the Son.

Then the scene shifts again to his presentation in the temple. Mary had to wait forty days after her delivery according to the law before going to the temple. They brought him in to present him to the Lord because the law says that all Israelite sons are set apart for the Lord. When they bring him into the temple, there's an old man who had been led there by the Holy Ghost because it had been revealed to him that he would see the Messiah before his death. When he sees the baby, he knows that this is the child he's been waiting for all his life. He takes the child into his arms and begins to prophecy concerning him and Mary.

- **Stone of stumbling** – Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The prophet Isaiah recorded this **Isaiah 8:14-15** And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. *Jesus was their Messiah and King but since he was not at all what they expected, they stumbled at him and fell.* They were not expecting a humble Messiah, they were expecting a militant one. A great warrior to overthrow Pilate and drive Rome out of their country and resume David's kingdom. What they were ignorant of was the kingdom of God which is a spiritual kingdom where sinners repent of being rebels and come under the rulership of God. Had they accepted the kingdom of God message and repented, they would've received the promise of a restored Davidic kingdom. But they stumbled at his word and fell and were broken. But to us that are saved...he is the Rock of ages, the Corner stone that the house of God is built upon. Some day in the future, Israel will see that he is and always was their Messiah, repent and rise again!

- **Sign spoken against** – A sign is a token of confirmation or a wonder or miracle. There are three signs given proving the authenticity of who Jesus Christ is. **Isaiah 7:14** Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Immanuel means “God with us” He being born of a virgin was a sign... a sign that was spoken against. The Pharisees to insult him said “We be not born of fornication” as a jab at him insinuating that he was born out of wedlock.

When Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus of the necessity of the new birth, he gave him a sign to look for **John 3:14-16** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *Jesus knew that Nicodemus was an expert in the Old Testament, so he referred him to the time when God sent poisonous serpents among the people as punishment for complaining. The serpents bit the people and the people died. When Moses prayed for the people, God told him to make a brass serpent and hang it on a pole. Whoever was bitten if they looked at the serpent on the pole would live.* The serpent is a symbol of sin and brass is a symbol of judgment. The brass serpent on the pole is a picture of sin being judged. Jesus was saying when you see me lifted up on the cross, that is your sin being judged and if you look in faith, you will live. I believe that Nicodemus understood what Jesus meant on the day of his death because the Bible records **John 19:39-40** And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Matthew 12:38-40 Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. *When Jonah was in the belly of the whale, it took him down into the depths of the earth for three days. But afterwards it brought him back up and spit him out on dry land. When Jesus died his body was laid in a tomb while his spirit was in the heart of earth revealing himself to the Old Testament saints in paradise. But after three days he raised his body and left the tomb empty. The empty tomb is the sign Jesus gave to that generation that he was who he claimed to be.* But that sign was spoken against the chief priests and elders who paid the guards to claim that the disciples stole his body.

