

## GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

### I. Luke 2:1-20

**A. Luke 2:1-20 (NLT) tells the often heard story of Jesus' birth, one we never tire of hearing:** **1** *At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire.* **2** *(This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.)* **3** *All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census.* **4** *And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee.* **5** *He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a Child.* **6** *And while they were there, the time came for her Baby to be born.* **7** *She gave birth to her firstborn Son. She wrapped Him snugly in strips of cloth and laid Him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.* **8** *That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.* **9** *Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified,* **10** *but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.* **11** *The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!* **12** *And you will recognize Him by this sign: You will find a Baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger."* **13** *Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,* **14** *"Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."* **15** *When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."* **16** *They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the Baby, lying in the manger.* **17** *After seeing Him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this Child.* **18** *All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished,* **19** *but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.* **20** *The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.*

**B. Among all the Nativity characters, how can we not love the shepherds?! I think of them as earthy, blue collar, perhaps unkempt, unpretentious, maybe looked down upon by their fellow citizens, and yet these are the ones God sent angels to tell of Jesus' birth in the village of Bethlehem. And they went, and they saw, and they marveled, and then they spread the news of what they heard and saw and experienced. How can you not love these guys! I wonder what happened to them? I wonder if we'll get to meet them? I wonder how many times they've shared their firsthand, eyewitness accounts over the past two millennia?**

**C. At breakfast this past Tuesday we mused over the fact that while the Bible tells us for certain that angels appeared and declared Jesus' birth and glorified God in the presence of those lowly shepherds, did they actually sing or merely speak? In other words, when the angelic hosts uttered their "*gloria in excelsis Deo*" was it just a loud declarative pronouncement or was it to the melodious chorus of divine music? Handel thought the latter and so did others like Charles Wesley and Charles Spurgeon. But the bottom line is we really don't know.**

**D. As for those shepherds, did they sing? I mean what was the rest of that glorious night like back in those dark fields? And if the angels actually did sing, were**

their melodies still ringing in the shepherds' ears? Like shepherd boy David, did one of these guys break out a lyre and try to replicate the angels' heavenly tune? Or did they try and whistle or hum it? Or did they just keep pinching themselves saying, "*We just saw thousands of angels and more than that--The MESSIAH! laying in a feeding trough here in our hometown!*" "*Glory to God in the highest!*"

E. But as I told us all last Sunday, we dare not look at the manger scene without looking at the cross scene and the resurrection scene. For this Infant Child, born in a manger, ultimately came to die for our sins! This helpless One wrapped in swaddling clothes ultimately came to robe us in His righteousness! This One from eternity past, this One & Only Son of God, came that we might share eternity in heaven! This is what Christmas--deep down--really means! It's not what Hollywood or Hallmark say it is, it's what the Hallowed One declares it to be! His Word is not vague nor His voice silent. From His shouts to His whispers, the Good News has gone forth! So yes indeed: *Glory to God in the highest and peace upon you men and women, boys and girls, for upon you all His favor has come to rest because He has called you to Himself and made you His own!* *Glory to God in the highest!*

\* Close with Prayer...

### [Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

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back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.

### [Bonus Goodies](#)

**The Christmas Invitation to Everyone - John Piper**

<http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/the-christmas-invitation-to-everyone>

**No, Christmas is NOT Pagan! - Stand to Reason**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtKSkSGB42U>

**The True Story Behind Handel's 'Messiah' - Mark Martin CBN News**

<https://www1.cbn.com/cbnnews/us/2011/december/handels-messiah-inspires-listeners-transcends-time>

**Hallelujah Chorus - Famous Food Court Flashmob 11/13/10 (55 Million Views)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>

### [More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras](#)

#### [Luke 1:26-38 \(ESV\)](#)

**26** In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, **27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" **29** But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. **30** And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father David, **33** and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." **34** And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" **35** And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. **36** And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God." **38** And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

#### [Matthew 1:18-25 \(ESV\)](#)

**18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with Child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy

Spirit. **21** She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a Son. And He called His name Jesus.

### **Colossians 1:19-20 (NIV)**

**19** For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, **20** and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.

### **Quote by Charles Spurgeon**

"And notice how well they told the story, and surely you will love them! Not with the stammering tongue of one who tells a tale in which he has no interest; nor even with the feigned interest of a man that would move the passions of others, when he feels no emotion himself; but with joy and gladness, such as angels can only know. They sang the story out, for they could not stop to tell it in heavy prose. They sang, “Glory to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” I think they sang it with gladness in their eyes; with their hearts burning with love, and with breasts as full of joy as if the good news to man had been good news to themselves."

- Charles Spurgeon, *“The First Christmas Carol.”* A Sermon Delivered on Sunday, December 20, 1857, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

### **Quote by C.S. Lewis**

"Lying at your feet is your dog. Imagine, for the moment, that your dog and every dog is in deep distress. Some of us love dogs very much. If it would help all the dogs in the world to become like men, would you be willing to become a dog? Would you put down your human nature, leave your loved ones, your job, hobbies, your art and literature and music, and choose instead of the intimate communion with your beloved, the poor substitute of looking into the beloved's face and wagging your tail, unable to smile or speak? Christ by becoming man limited the thing which to Him was the most precious thing in the world; His unhampered, unhindered communion with the Father. "

### **Quote by John Piper**

"Look to Jesus this Christmas. Receive the reconciliation that He bought. Don't put it on the shelf unopened...Open it and enjoy the gift. Rejoice in Him. Make Him your pleasure. Make Him your treasure."

### **The Preeminence of Christ - Sermon Excerpt by John MacArthur**

<http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/1601/the-preeminence-of-christ>

And so when we come to Hebrews we come to the preeminence of Christ and especially when we come to Hebrews 1:1-3 do we come to the preeminence of Christ. Someone has said He came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman.

He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He became Son of man that we might become sons of God. He was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity and only once crossed the boundary of the land that which He was born and that in His childhood. He had no wealth or influence and had neither training nor education in the world schools.

His relatives were inconspicuous and un-influential. In infancy, He startled a king. In boyhood, He puzzled the learned doctors. In manhood, He ruled the course of nature. He walked upon the billows and hushed the seas asleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold all of the books about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all songwriters together.

He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine, and yet He healed more broken hearts than the doctors have healed broken bodies. This Jesus Christ is the star of astronomy, the rock of geology, the lion and the lamb of zoology, the harmonizer of all discords, and the healer of all diseases. And throughout history great men have come and gone yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him. Satan could not seduce Him. Death could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. This is our Christ the preeminent one.

- John MacArthur, sermon excerpt from "*The Preeminence of Christ*" Hebrews 1:2-3, delivered January 30, 1972.

### **Analysis of Eight Prophecies**

**By Harry R. Osborne - Article Excerpt - Truth Magazine**

**<http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume40/GOT040196.html>**

Taking just these eight specific prophecies concerning the Messiah, Peter Stoner wrote in his book, *Science Speaks*, to show that mere coincidence cannot explain all of these being fulfilled in one man. He applied the science of probability to show the chance that all eight prophecies would be fulfilled in one man. That probability was calculated to be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000! When Stoner's calculations were submitted to the American Scientific Affiliation for verification, both a committee of review and the Executive Council found them "dependable and accurate in regards to the scientific material presented" (see foreword by H. Harold Hartzler in *Science Speaks*). Is there any comparison we can make to help understand that huge number?

It does not take a great deal of mathematical prowess to understand that 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 shows that the odds are heavily against these prophecies being fulfilled as a result of sheer chance. But do we really have any concept of how many 100,000,000,000,000,000 is? Is there any comparison we can make to help understand that huge number?

In the book *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, Josh McDowell points out the fact that it would take 100,000,000,000,000,000 silver dollars to cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Suppose we marked one of those silver dollars and let a man with a blindfold

wander as long and far as he wished, but instructed him to pick up one specific silver dollar. He would have the same chance of picking up the right silver dollar as that one man would have of fulfilling those eight prophecies about the Messiah.

- Harry R. Osborne, Excerpt from "*Analysis of Probability Regarding Prophecies*" from *Guardian of Truth* XL: No. 14, p. 6-7, July 18, 1996.