

Proclaiming the Gospel

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
But unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (*1 Cor. 1.18*).

Edifying the Body of Christ (*Eph. 4.10-16*)

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The Wise Still Seek Him

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Glorious! Magnificent Advent!

Here sat the shepherds watching over the sheep that they loved. They had raised them from babies; they had watched them frolic among the rocks, the brush, and the hills, chasing each other, their personalities developing as they grew. These shepherds had hazarded their lives to protect the sheep when predators threatened them.

The evening must have been peaceful with a feeling that something good could happen. How many times must they have sat like this and talked about the promised Messiah, how He would bring peace and happiness; He would watch over His people – His sheep!

What a glorious experience for those looking for their Messiah, expecting the fulfillment of prophecy – the Word of the Lord which they had known all their lives. The shepherds watching over their flock would understand the Shepherd of our souls!

Imagine what it would have been like to be one of the Old Testament prophets or any and all of them who had this knowledge, this vision of the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of the world (Isa 53; Mic 5.2). They wrote much about His coming and lived it, believed it so strongly they were willing to give their lives for what they knew others had rejected! Imagine what that would have been like to live in such a thrilling time. Oh! How glorious and how magnificent!

Then go forward, and imagine what it was like when His coming was actually announced, announced! to the Shepherds in the field, men not of the highest esteem, as were the religious leaders of that day or the learned wise men. Why would God take notice of **the shepherds**? Surely the Almighty God would not look at **them** – lowly men who nevertheless were watching with expectation, awake – seeing that which the world around them could not see, hearing the voice that others could not know, "... keeping watch over their flock by night" (Lk 2.8b). They were shepherds who had a shepherd's heart and knew the Shepherd's heart that was coming, before ever they heard the announcement. They knew the Word of God, the prophets' writings, and experienced with them, no doubt, that thrilling and glorious time of when it would happen.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

then, keeping the "star" before us to guide us on our arduous journey through this season of His return, let us never be distracted nor deterred from the path of righteousness which leads us to our King and eternal home with Him.

It is in the midst of unrest, wars, and persecution that the promises of His second coming will be fulfilled. How glorious for God's people! Proclaim to the world the Word of the Lord. **He is coming again!** Get ready now. Do not miss Him. Be constantly watchful and prayerful. Look to the signs of the times; imagine the glory of His appearing;

**feel the anticipation and thrill of His
Glorious, Magnificent Advent!**

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Co-laborers together for Jesus Christ

Come apart and rest (Mark 6.31).

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.

The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, 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 (Lk 2.8-11).

Hear the shepherds: "He is here! He is born – the Messiah – in Bethlehem! Come on! Let us go; let us see the Messiah! Tell everyone, 'Come, and go with us.' Proclaim it to the world. Shout it! Our King is come!"

Consider the wise men who followed the star signifying Jesus' birth (Mt 2). These were learned men who knew the prophecies; they were seeking, watching, anticipating this glorious event, the fulfillment of God's promise. Imagine how their hearts leapt when they saw the sign for which they had so long awaited. They were doing what Jesus instructed His disciples, and us, to do: "Watch and pray... (Mk 13.33). They did not sit idly doing nothing; they searched the scriptures, learning well what the scriptures said about Jesus' birth.

Travel with the wise men from the Far East, for possibly two years of traveling on camelback on the arduous journey. Feel the initial excitement when they saw the star, the eagerness to start the journey. Hear them say to each other, "Hurry! We do not want to miss Him; He is the Christ, the Savior. We **must** see Him! Do we have everything? The gifts? We must remember the gifts!" Then as the months of travel continue, perhaps the excitement wanes, but the anticipation remains: the knowledge of the meaning of the star, the deep rooted longing to see the Messiah. They had studied; they trusted the Word of God.

Then some, like Simeon, had patience to wait for God's promise. I am reminded of a gift given to me by a friend that says, "God keeps His promises." Simeon knew he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ (Lk 2.25, 26).

And, there was Anna. Oh, that I might love the Lord as did the Prophetess Anna. "And she *[was]* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *[God]* with fastings and prayers night and day" (Lk 2.36, 37). Such love! What an honor to be shown the Christ and to spread the word to those around her!

Note the "lowly shepherds" were also privileged to see the Messiah as were the learned wise men. Not one of us is denied the privilege of coming to know and see our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And just imagine, **just imagine** it happening to you as to those who witnessed His first coming. What would you do with it? We are there. Just imagine; No!

Realize: we are there. He is coming again! Do we have a shepherd's heart? And, are we ready? He is coming very soon. "Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King." The King is coming! Are you ready?

The coming of Jesus over two thousand years ago revolutionized the world with **TRUTH** – the revelation of Jesus Christ which swept throughout the world and revealed the power and work of the Lord God Almighty in Jesus Christ through

His followers. The **TRUTH** has thrived in the midst of Satan's efforts to destroy it for thousands of years – all through the ages. During these years we have witnessed the Church, the body of Christ, growing in the knowledge of the Lord, experiencing His forgiveness, His presence, His glory, His power, and miracles.

The growth of the Church has not been without persecution. Satan never stops his attack on the body of Christ; but in the midst of great persecution, pain, torture, and martyrdom, God has always had a people who were faithful through it all, a people who looked forward to eternity with the Lord.

Now we look forward to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Expect it to be with persecution and danger of life, with sin magnified in the earth (Mt 24). But, oh! the glory of His appearing. God has a people waiting, watching, longing for Him – a people so filled with hunger to see Him, to know His fullness, the power of His Holy Spirit. And, this people will experience the supernatural power of God, the miracles of God which will tear down strongholds of Satan and bring victory from the Lord in the lives of many of God's people in spite of the power of the Antichrist. These people will be watching and yearning for the return of Jesus. Yes, Satan is fighting, knowing that his time is short; but many will "love not their lives unto death" (Rev 12.11).

Nation is rising against nation. It is a time of wars and rumors of wars; yet, they are saying, "Peace;" but, there is no peace. There are earthquakes in divers places (Mt 24.6, 7; Mk 13.7, 8; Lk 21.10, 11). People are trembling with fear for that which is coming upon the world – as is foretold in the Holy Bible, the Word of the Lord God of Israel.

It is time to herald His coming again. The time is right; the signs are now before us. We are in a new Advent season. Two thousand years have passed, and we have begun the third millennium, the third "day" – if you will. What happened on the third day? Jesus said that on the third day, he would rise again (Mt 20.18, 19). It was a day of resurrection life. Today is a day of resurrection life (Hosea 6.1, 2; Rom 8.11). It is time for knowing Him in the power of His resurrection, time to give life to ones relationship with God – renewed faith, renewed trust, renewed prayer, renewed power, life – a time to be stirred and quickened, given life by the Holy Spirit with increasing expectation and hope of His coming. It is time to "...walk in newness of life" (Rom 6.3-5); Jesus wants us to experience His resurrection life in us as we long for and look for, with great expectancy, the Second Advent, the second coming of the Messiah, the Christ of God

It is time. It is time, as did the shepherds, to learn the heart of our Shepherd and let our hearts meld with His as we wait in expectation of His coming. We can rest in the assurance that God keeps His promises and, with Simeon, see and recognize the King when He appears. The Prophetess Anna considered nothing of this world important except to dwell in the Lord's presence "with fastings and prayers" in total surrender to Him. May we make this surrender in preparation for His coming;