



The Great Revelation

Luke 2:15 NIV

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

My earliest memory of Christmas was when final proof came that Santa Claus was real. I was perhaps four or five years old and Christmas Eve, I heard a loud banging around on the porch, a boisterous, "ho, ho, ho" and a firm knock on the door. My mom urged me to open the door and go out on the porch and I found the most beautiful tricycle in the world sitting there. I shouted with glee, jumped up and down and gazed in wonder at what Santa had left for me. The joy of Christmas was gloriously physical, encompassing, radiating. Of course, my take on Christmas is much more sophisticated now and so is yours but, I wonder if that makes us better.

Christmas was not always Christian, at least in regard to the time of the year we celebrate it; we know that it was first a pagan holiday, a time of drinking and carousing. Yet, it did not immediately "clean up its act" even after the Christian community took it over and made Christmas a time of celebrating the birth of Jesus. There was much about the reveling that made it a fearful time for good families who avoided the mobs running the streets during Christmas. It really was not until the Protestant Christians of Germany embraced Christmas fully as a time of honoring the Christ child that Christmas took on its holiness and wonder.

The night Jesus was actually born a great split in the cosmos occurred as the supernatural met the natural in a spectacular display. Rarely do we see the supernatural beings of God's universe; they remain almost entirely hidden from us. Abraham came upon them. Elisha did too along with Samson's parents and Jacob. Many times, they are only spotted in dreams if at all. Of all the billions who have come and gone, only a handful have ever seen God's angels. However, that one night, whose date has been forgotten by the world, a crowd of men were stunned by their appearance.

Only Luke, records the moment. The other Gospel writers and apostles failed to mention it when they wrote their parts of the Bible. There was nothing notable about the night to warn the shepherds of what was coming as far as we know. No meteor showers, lunar eclipses or bright Christmas stars paved the way. It just happened without warning; a split second the shepherds were tired and bored and maybe even hungry and the next, the heavens exploded before them. **And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.** (Luke 2:8-9 NIV) A single angel was enough to throw the shepherds into panic. We certainly must not skirt quickly past the included note that the "glory of the Lord shone around them", but, it was the solitary angel that shook them violently. This consideration should not be taken lightly. When the supernatural crashes down upon the natural, there is shock and amazement that takes place. The senses are almost always dazzled and overwhelmed. The

spiritual core of humanity cannot take in the supernatural casually. A violent eruption occurs within that shakes the ground of those who come upon it.

We know that the presence of the angel did not bring this to a conclusion though. More of the night exploded with wonder as the shepherds took in the glory of God. **Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."** (Luke 2:13-14 NIV) Imagine the spectacle of it and how shook they all must have been by what they witnessed. Not a single shepherd could have been unmoved. Before the sky filled with supernatural though, the first angel announced to the shepherds with tremendous solemnity, **"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."** (Luke 2:10-12 NIV)

How would you have responded to this declaration? What would you have done if you heard this strangely electrifying news? Would you have continued to stay with your sheep that night? Would you have continued watching your show or checking Facebook? Would you have worked on your dinner or gone through your emails or maybe even headed off to bed? Not everyone who comes upon the supernatural is knocked off their feet. Plenty, like the Israelites who gave little thought to the God who revealed Himself to them in a cloud and with lightning and great glory, simply go on with the day as if nothing much happened. Such was not the case though with these shepherds! **When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.** (Luke 2:15-16 NIV)

When God reveals Himself to you, it is a supernatural event. No one comes to Christ without the Spirit of God intervening. It is not an intellectual exercise, not a logical conclusion, this matter of being born again. This is always a work of the supernatural Presence of God that makes it clear that you must come to Christ for salvation. It never is just you and your mind making this connection. Always God must be there for you to trust Him, want Him. Any other religious or political or intellectual consideration can spring from just you but not this. Jesus must enter your mind if you are to ever become actually Christian, actually a new creation in Christ. The conclusion of the text is one of the most heartwarming accounts found anywhere in literature. **When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.** (Luke 2:17-20 NIV)

When the supernatural meets you; when God invades your heart, you are stirred with either resentment toward Him or devotion to Him. Satan and the Israelites who rebelled against God each did so because the glory of the Lord was frustrating to them and felt like a hindrance to what they wanted. For the shepherds, it was the beginning of eternal life, the start of joy. What does God do for you? Does He stir up resentment and disappointment? Do you get aggravated by what He needs of you, what He expects of you or are you thrilled by His love for you, captivated by His presence in you? Have you the pleasure of the shepherds in you; joyful that He is there with you? You can quickly tell who has your heart, the devil or supernatural Jesus. If it bugs you that Christ seems to expect so much of you, wants more out of you that you are willing to give, then Satan is more your friend than you might be willing to admit. But, if there are no boundaries to how far you will go to glorify and bring honor than Jesus, then you are close to where the shepherds were, to where Jacob was and where Mary was as she sat with the crucified Christ in the tomb. What sort of reaction does the presence of God here stir in your heart as you come before Him now? Are you with the shepherds in this, full of joy at what the Lord has done in you or are you too big for God and a bit cranky that He expects too much of you?