

Signs and Wonders

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Turn with me if you would to Luke 2:1-20 –

Read Luke 2:1-20

### **The Birth of Jesus**

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup> (This was the first census that took place while <sup>[a]</sup> Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup> And everyone went to their own town to register.

<sup>4</sup> So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

<sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

<sup>15</sup> 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."

<sup>16</sup> So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger.

<sup>17</sup> When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about

this child,<sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.<sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.<sup>20</sup> The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

III. A Salvation Army woman was informed by a policeman that a local ordinance would prevent her from ringing her bells to invite contributions. She was contrite and apologetic that she had “broken” the law. But the next day she was back in front of the store... doing greater business than ever... as she waved one sign and then another in the air. One sign said "ding" and the other said "dong."

Throughout this month, we'll be seeing houses all lit up with Christmas lights and decorated with reindeer on the roofs and those blowup Santa Clauses and Snowmen balloons in people's yards. Stores will be filled with tinsel, Christmas trees, and holiday music. And of course, you'll see the Salvation Army people out there ringing their bells and asking for donations for the poor.

When you see these things like this taking place, you know that Christmas isn't too far away. These are all signs of the season. The woman in our story also was a sign of the season... and she even used literal “signs” to get her message across.

Scripture says that God ALSO used a literal “sign” to get His message across. The angel said to the shepherds in our passage today: "And this will be a SIGN to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." Luke 2:12

This was not the kind of “sign” that most of us would have used. Most of us would have used something a little more dramatic. I mean, here are these shepherds surrounded by angelic beings that fill the sky and they're so frightened that they're literally frozen in their tracks. One commentator suggested that they may have even fallen to the ground and groveled at the feet of these heavenly beings.

Comparatively, the presence of a baby in a manger seems almost anti-climatic, doesn't it?

We notice in this passage that this somewhat subtle “sign” of the baby in the manger had a more powerful effect on the shepherds than anything else that you and I could have come up with.

Luke 2 tells us that “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 , and filled with wonder, at what the shepherds said to them.

... 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 2:17-18 & 20

This quiet unassuming child, in the feeding trough of a barn, seemed to have an overwhelming effect on these simple shepherds. And it drew their attention to the main message that God intended to communicate.

There's a great advertising phrase that Christians have used over the past years: I think you can help me fill in the blanks....."Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_(reason) for the \_\_\_\_\_(season)."

He's the reason that we Christians celebrate at this time of year!  
He's the focus of this ENTIRE holy season for us.

And amidst all of the "signs" of this season: the bright lights, the festive decorations, the cheerful music, the great food!!.... and so on and so on....it's possible for these "signs" of Christmas to distract us from the Sign that God sent to us and we could end up missing the true sign, the true meaning, the true reason for this season.....the sign that God sent to us was his Son, Jesus, a Baby born in a manger!!

There are lots of people – even Christians – who get wrapped up in the hustle and bustle, the hurrying around to buy presents and to decorate the house, going to this event or that party, and Jesus just kind of falls somewhere into the background of why we are celebrating!

It's not that we mean to overlook the baby in the manger... it's just that there's a lot of other stuff going on. There are so many other things that are intriguing and entertaining and powerful that Jesus can get overshadowed.

But we who love Jesus don't want that happening to us, so it's important that we guard against becoming distracted. From being lulled into focusing on something other than Jesus during this season.

The only reason we celebrate Christmas is because it is the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, Emmanuel, God with Us!!!

Galatians 4:4-5 – "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons and daughters. "

Can I ask you a thought provoking question this morning? What would our lives look like if “the fullness of time” had not come? What would our lives look like if God had never given us a reason for this season? What if He had never sent a Sign to us???

Well, let me share some possibilities.....

1.- It wouldn't be the year 2012 AD ... BUT ... we would be in the Jewish year 5771.

2.- There would be no Christian Holidays and many less other holidays that we celebrate. There would be no CHRISTMAS ... no tree, presents, no Christmas meal ... no birth of Jesus. There would be no EASTER this coming March. There would be no THANKSGIVING ... the Pilgrims were Christians looking for a place to practice their faith in freedom. There would be no MOTHER'S/FATHER'S DAY ... they began in the Christian Church. There would be no HALLOWEEN ... which began in the 9th Century AD as the day before “All Saints Day”.

If the “time had not yet come” and if God has not sent to us a sign.....

3. There would be no AMERICA – Christopher Columbus was a Christian on a religious quest to discover new lands for Christ and to bring Christianity to all people.

4. We would still be under the Old Testament Law of Moses. If we wanted to worship God, as Gentiles, you and I would have to convert to the Jewish faith. We would be offering animal sacrifices ... travel to Jerusalem 3 times a year for Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Tithe would be 30% ... 10% tithe of our crops & herds to God ... 10% tithe to the Levites ... 10% tithe to the Temple in Jerusalem.

5.- We wouldn't have fellowship with God the “Father”. In the Old Testament times, there was no concept of a “Heavenly Father”. they looked to God as a stern judge, not as a loving father. It was JESUS who gave the Disciples the concept of a personal relationship with God the Father. When the Disciples heard Jesus praying to God, as a FATHER, they said, “Jesus, would you Teach us to pray like that!” ... “Our Father who art in Heaven...” !!

6.- We wouldn't have a concept of Heaven as our eternal home. In Old Testament times, the Jews looked forward to the promised KINGDOM here on earth ... NOT ... for eternal life in Heaven. “Heaven”, as we think about it, was a new concept to the Disciples. Jesus said He was going back to Heaven to prepare it for us.

If the time had not yet come and if God had not sent us a sign,

7. There would be no New Testament and no Church as we know it today!

8. There would be an incredible difference in the Art that we see from time to time; some of the greatest art comes from Christianity.

9. There would be an incredible difference in science and Medicine as we know it.,

10. our education of people would be different - it was from the basis that people are created in the likeness of God that they needed to be taught so that they could live up to their potential. Most of the prominent Universities in our Country were founded as Christian schools.

11. We wouldn't know the fullness of Gods love demonstrated to us, John 3:16

12. We wouldn't know how to Love others, 1John 4:8, 19

13. We wouldnt know Truth - John 14:6; I am the way, the TRUTH and the Life.

14. We wouldnt know the WAY to live through life.

- John 14:6; Jesus is the Way"

15. We couldn't experience Real Peace. - Jesus said in John 16:33; "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, But take heart, I have overcome the world."

13. We couldn't experience Gods Presence. - Matt. 1:23; "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means, God with us."

14. We couldn't experience Redemption. - - One difference in the birth of Jesus compared to the rest of us is this: We are born to live, Jesus was born to die!

If the fullness of time had not come and if God had not sent to us a SIGN,

15. We couldn't Experience Forgiveness. Eph. 1:7 - "In Him (Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of Gods grace."

16. We wouldn't have any HOPE. - 1Tim. 4:9-10 "This is a trustworthy saying, that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior for all men!"

17. We couldn't have Confidence for life beyond death. John 11:25; Jesus said; "I am the Resurrection and the Life, He who believes in me, even though he dies will live again."

It's sad, it's a bit morbid, it is a life that not one of us should choose. But friends, guess what??!!! The fullness of time did come. God did send to us a SIGN! There WAS a FIRST Christmas. Jesus WAS born 2000 + years ago.

And because there was that first Christmas, and over 2,000 Christmases that have followed, you and I have the opportunity to experience the true reason for this season!!

This will be a sign to you.....a baby will be wrapped in clothes, lying in a manger.....he is your savior, he will be called wonderful counselor, everlasting Father, Mighty God, Prince of peace and might I add, the King of Kings! And friends I wish I could describe him in the attitude and the candence like that of Dr. SM Lockridge, but I can't.....so I'll let him describe for us who we are celebrating this Christmas!!

### **III. That's My King Video**

Friends, Because God sent to us a Sign, His Son, Jesus

1. We can Experience Gods love for us
2. We have the Ability to truly Love others and experience love from others.
3. We can Know Truth.
4. We can Know the Way in life.
5. We can Have Real Peace.
6. We can be Forgiven from our sins, failures, & mistakes
7. We can be Redeemed and Reconciled with God.
8. We can be confident in the Resurrection of Christ for eternal life, through Faith in Jesus.
9. We can experience Hope in life.

10. We can Experience God with us through the person of Jesus!

Don't be distracted by the false signs of the true Reason for this Season! Be fully engaged in why we celebrate Christmas this year!

**Prayer**