

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Luke 2:6-19

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: Christmas Day brings so many memories to the older people and much happiness to the young children, with surprise and joys. It is the most favorite time of the year to most people. There is, however no actual fact behind the date of December 25 as the actual date of the Lord Jesus' birth. There is much speculation and disagreements but nobody really knows. The first recorded date of celebrating December 25 as the birth of Jesus was in 336 A.D. and a few years later Pope Julius declared that December 25 would be the time the "Church" celebrated Christmas, the birth of Jesus. It was also thought that it was in March that Mary encountered the angel and became expectant by the Holy Spirit and nine months later would be December when she gave birth. Another thought was that it was on March 25 that Jesus suffered crucifixion, nine months before December 25 when his mother, Mary, went through the pains of giving Him birth. Also the thought is that since the Romans had all sort of pagan "holidays" that the early Christians selected one of the pagan festivals, holidays, such as one they had on December 25 (having to do with the Sun), as a time to encourage the spread of the Christianity, therefore declaring that celebration of the birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ, SON of God would be on December 25. It doesn't really matter when the birth of Jesus actually happened, but that it did happen.

I. IN THE FULNESS OF TIME GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON

1. **v6, 7**
2. A very simple statement.
 - Mary gave birth to her son, Jesus, in a normal manner.
 - As was the custom, Mary wrapped her Baby in swaddling clothes (soft cloths) to keep Him warm.
 - He was laid down in a "manger" where the inn-keeper kept farm animals, such as in a barn or stable, perhaps attached to the dwelling place of the innkeeper and his family.
 - All this was in the custom and tradition of where they lived.
3. Simple shepherds were tending their flocks. **(v8)**
 - The shepherds were guarding their flock against wild animals and probably had a campfire going and perhaps even asleep other than whoever was on guard.
4. Something out of the ordinary happened to the shepherds. **(v9)**
 - Suddenly a bright light surrounded them and a stranger, an angel appeared.
 - The shepherds were scared, "sore afraid."
 - The angel told them that a special Baby had been born and where to go look for Him.
 - **vv10-12**
 - Just as sudden as the angel appeared, there appeared many more and all were saying together about peace, good will, and giving God glory. **(v13)**
 - After the angels disappeared, the shepherds got up and started out for Bethlehem to try to find the Baby the angel was talking about. **(v15)**
 - The shepherds acted on faith that what they were told was true.
 - The shepherds found the Mary, Joseph and the little Baby just like the angel had told them.
 - After seeing for themselves what the angel had told them to look for, they hurried off to tell others about the angels and the Baby in the manger. **(v17-18)**
5. The first part of the account is normal, keeping with the habits and customs of their country and having the baby was in the normal manner. The second part of the account is strange, exciting, revealing

the most extraordinary events with God sending an angel at first then sending a great group of angels to announce the birth of His Son.

II. THE SHEPHERDS WERE THE FIRST "MISSIONARIES"

1. *"...The shepherds made known abroad the saying which had been told them concerning this child..."*
- v17
 - The shepherds were told about the Babe, then they went to see for themselves and believed.
 - The shepherds hurried away and told everyone they met about the Babe and those who heard were also filled with wonder.
2. Millions have since that night heard that amazing story and have wondered also, many turned and found salvation, eternal life, peace, joy and blessing through the little Babe who came in such a humble way.
 - The Son of God, Jesus, was born into human form, *"...made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men..." (Philippians 2:7)*
3. God did not send this message through the High Priest, nor the Roman Governor, not to any prominent people, not did He send it to anybody who might have been worshiping in the temple.
 - God sent the message to shepherds on a quiet hillside, under the starlight night as they tended their sheep.
 - God can still send messages to anybody no matter who they are or where they are.

CONCLUSION:

1. The birth of God's Son, Jesus is only the beginning of the amazing life the Lord Jesus lived here in the human body God made for Him.
 - The Christmas story, the birth of Jesus is but the beginning of the wonderful witness which has won millions to a saving faith in Him.
2. What does the Christmas story mean to YOU?
 - Is it just another fairy tale?
 - If you believe that the earthly, human life of Jesus Christ was merely a natural human being's existence, then the Christmas story has little if any value to you.
 - If you believe the story to be true in all aspects, then you can have eternal life through this one called Jesus whose earthly birth is celebrated on December 25 and then do as the shepherds, go tell somebody about it.
3. "Merry Christmas" wraps up all that people have heard from their childhood.
 - Let us praise God for all the importance of that birth, life, death and then the resurrection.
 - Let us thank God for His goodness to us.
 - Let us make a day of dedication out of Christmas by giving to the Lord Jesus that gift which He desires above all others - our hear, our life.