



January 1, 2010

Dear Friends,

All of us on Our Father's Farm had a glorious Christmas—complete with snow! It was a great reminder of the snow-white lamb who was born to take away the sins of the world!

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all, the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'

"When the angels went away from them, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them." Luke 2:1-20

Luke's audience would have immediately picked up on the religious significance of the Bethlehem shepherds watching their flocks by night. Aware of the Old Testament and the Jewish Temple worship of the day, they would have known that when you said Bethlehem, you were also saying "sacrificial lambs". The hills around Bethlehem were home to the thousands of lambs used in ritual worship in the Temple. David, as a boy from Bethlehem, likely tended sheep destined for the daily offerings or used in the sacrifices on the high holidays in these very hills. Every day, according to the Torah, two lambs were required for sacrifice in the Temple, meaning that 730 were needed each year plus the tens of thousands more lambs needed by families at Pesach (Passover) and for other religious rituals. When you say Bethlehem, you say sacrificial lambs.

The twice-daily offering of a male lamb as commanded in the Torah was known as the *tamid* (meaning *the continuous offering*). It was the first offering and the last offering of each day (Numbers 28:1-8). The Hebrew word *tamiym*, (translated for lambs "without spot or blemish") means *complete, whole, entire, sound* and is the same word used as "perfect" describing Noah in Genesis 6:9 and by God to Abraham in Genesis 17:1. It was during the hour of the final sacrifice of the day that the Lord Jesus was offered up as that sacrificial lamb, once and for all, continually, as the atonement for our sins.

Hearing that Jesus was born in Bethlehem it is easy for us to imagine one of Luke's listeners saying, *"Of course the Lamb of God would originate in Bethlehem - all the lambs for sacrifice came from there."* Every event in the life of Jesus moved toward His prophesied death. On the night of His birth, an angel appeared to the shepherds who were out in the fields, "keeping watch over their flock by night" and

instructed them: "...you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger". The shepherds immediately responded, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which haShem (the Name) has made known to us" (v. 15). *How did they know where to go?*

Close to where the shepherds were camped, in the northern part of Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem (less than an hour's journey by foot), was the tower known as Migdal Eder, the "watch-tower of the flock." This was the place where shepherds cared for the flocks that were destined to be sacrificed in the Temple. The males were offered as burnt-offerings, the females as peace-offerings.

On the night in which Jesus was born, the angel's message came to the priests of the Temple, the shepherds, whose duties had been designated, often from their youth, to "keep watch over their flock." These were not just any sheep or shepherds. The shepherds who kept these flocks were men who were specifically trained for this task. They were educated in what a sacrificial animal had to be and it was their job to make sure that none of the animals were hurt, damaged or blemished. Therefore, the newborn lambs were wrapped in "swaddling cloths" (a gauze-like cloth-not a birthing cloth) to protect from injury-like baby Jesus. During lambing season the sheep were brought to the tower from the fields because the lower level functioned as the birthing room for sacrificial lambs. Being themselves under special rabbinical care, these priests would strictly maintain a ceremonially clean birthing place. Once birthed, the priestly shepherds would routinely place the lambs in the hewn depression of a limestone rock known as a "manger" and "wrap the newborn lambs in swaddling cloths," preventing them from thrashing about and harming themselves "until they had calmed down" so they could be inspected to see if they were "without spot or blemish" (Mishnah, *The Jewish Oral tradition & Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).

There was no need for the angels to give these priests/shepherds directions to the birth place because they already knew. These were the men who raised sacrificial lambs that were sacrificed in the Temple. When the angelic announcement came, they knew exactly where to go, as Luke 2 indicates, for there was only one place—"a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger"—could only mean their manger at the base of the Tower of the Flock where they swaddled the newborn lambs!

And so it was, in the little town of Bethlehem, our Savior was born—a fact that changed history! A fact that changed my life forever and the lives of all mankind! Danny and I pray that 2010 will be a year of God's favor (Isa. 61:2). May the Lord will bless you and keep you. May He cause His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace.

For His Glory Alone,
Danny and Rhonda

Updates:

Thank you for your gifts and lovely notes concerning our daughter and son-in-law's adoption. Our new grandson (Beckett) will arrive from Korea sometime between January and March. (To date, \$1605.00 has been given towards the \$18,000 balance).

Please continue to pray for us. We have a delightful thirteen year old girl (she and her sister adopted us) coming to stay in our home for several months while she receives healing and intensive care. We appreciate your prayers for our healing ministry, which the Lord is clearly blessing. Many are being healed and drawn deeper into the heart of Abba—to Him be ALL the glory!

ENCOUNTERING GOD INNER HEALING TRAINING: Learn how to connect with God in a way that not only heals your deepest wounds but also helps develop a deep intimate relationship with God. To register or for more information, e-mail Rhonda at: rhonda@harvesthome.org
DATE: Saturday and Sunday, Jan 30-31, 2010
TIME: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. COST: \$40 per person, which includes lunch and snacks both days. (\$70 per couple).
LOCATION: Our Father's Farm 1177 NW 300th Rd. Holden, MO 64040 (Please register before Jan. 20th.)

Harvest Home, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501 (C) (3) organization (#43-1723890)
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