

Peters Green News Sheet Issue No: 41

Sunday 20th December 2020



*We wish you a
Merry
Christmas
and a
Happy New
Year
From all at the
Chapel.*



Look To The Skies, There's A Celebration

*Lift Up Your Heads, Join The Angel Song
For Our Creator Becomes Our Saviour
As A Baby Born!*

This time of year is all about a baby, but not just *any* baby – it is about our Saviour and tells of the time that God broke through into our world in a very special way.

*Angels, Amazed, Bow In Adoration
'Glory To God In The Highest Heaven!'*

This was signified by the appearance of Angels to a group of shepherds who were told to hurry to Bethlehem to see what had happened.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." (Luke 2: 8 – 12)

Why Bethlehem? That question is answered in several carols.

*Once in **Royal David's** city
Stood a lowly cattle shed.
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for His bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ that little child.*

*He came down to earth from Heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all.
And his shelter was a stable,
And his cradle was a stall.
With the poor and mean and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour Holy.*

*O little town of **Bethlehem**,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in the dark street shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.*

*For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God, the King,
And peace to men on earth.*

Bethlehem is the city of King David and as Jesus is descended from him, that is where it was prophesied that Jesus was to be born. (Micah 5:2)

And so it was that Jesus was born in a stable – likely to have been in a cave, as many stables actually were in Bethlehem. The Bible makes no mention of animals in the stable but I would think that at least Joseph's donkey would be there. Joseph was a brave and fair man as he had to take on board the fact that Mary became pregnant due to divine not human intervention. He had thought to put her somewhere safe quietly until the baby was born to avoid disgracing her. Once the reality became clear to him, he took full responsibility for Mary in his own home until they obeyed the summons to Bethlehem.

So, we are back to the shepherds out in the fields. They must have had an almighty shock when the angels burst onto the scene and into song after delivering their message – and what a message of praise!

*While shepherds watched
Their flocks by night
All seated on the ground
The angel of the Lord came down
And glory shone around*

*"Fear not," he said,
For mighty dread
Had seized their troubled minds
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind,"*

*“To you in David’s
Town this day
Is born of David’s line
The Saviour who is Christ the Lord
And this shall be the sign.”*

*“The heavenly Babe
You there shall find
To human view displayed
And meanly wrapped In
swathing bands
And in a manger laid.”*

So the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found it was all as they had been told. However, we don’t know exactly how long the family stayed in the stable but it would have been at least eight days until the baby was due to be circumcised.

*“All glory be to
God on high
And to the earth be peace; Goodwill henceforth
From heaven to men Begin and never cease!”*

During this period, I assume, they had more visitors and some came from a long, long way away as we can see from this carol.

*We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and
mountain
Following yonder star*

*O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy Perfect Light*

Traditionally these are styled kings or wise men (Magi) from Persia. Amongst other accomplishments they were astrologers and natural scientists. They were interested in astronomy and detected unusual activity in the sky. Between 2 and 11 BC there were a number of candidates for the Star of Bethlehem. It is a case almost of take your pick! My preference is Jupiter as it would have risen in a slightly different

11 BC Halley’s Comet was visible moving across the sky.

7 BC Brilliant conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter

6 BC Jupiter was very bright as it moved across the sky.

5 – 2 BC the star Sirius rose on the first day of the Egyptian month Mesori at sunrise and shone with extraordinary brilliance. Mesori means ‘birth of a Prince.

place each night and on a long journey it may well have been leading the Magi. It is known history that at that time in the ancient world there was a strange expectation about a coming king – the Romans wrote about it, amongst others, and in fact proclaimed their Emperor Augustus as the saviour of the world about the same time Jesus was being born.

The star they had seen when it rose, went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. (Matt 2: 9b – 11)

*Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign.*

*Frankincense to offer have I.
Incense owns a Deity nigh.
Prayer and praising all men raising,
Worship Him, God on high.*

*Myrrh is mine: Its bitter perfume
Breaths a life of gathering gloom.
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.*

The gifts brought by the Magi all had great significance for this baby. Gold is the king of metals and is the gift given to a king.

Sweet smelling incense is used by priests to this day during worship and is therefore the gift to give to a priest.

Myrrh was used to enbalm bodies of the deceased. It is a gift for one who is to die.

The gifts brought by the Magi were not accidental – they prophesied that the baby Jesus would be the King of the World; our great High Priest and the Final Sacrifice to make atonement for our sins.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

The thing that is hard to get hold of and understand is this – Jesus died for YOU, no one else just YOU. Of course He also did this for every other person.

St. Augustine is quoted as having said that ‘God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love’.

It is so simple and yet so difficult to comprehend. Yet, all we need to do is simply believe.

Believe what? Believe that The Lord Jesus Christ – the baby born in Bethlehem all that time ago – is indeed the Saviour of the World and it is to Him we should bow the knee and simply say with Thomas the Apostle, ‘My Lord and my God!’

²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ²⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’ (John 20:28-29)

Perhaps we should also say a heartfelt ‘**thank you**’ to Almighty God.

Wishing you a blessed and joyful Christmas - Roger

