

BREAKING NEWS!

Today's Text: Luke 2: 1-20

Extracts:

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, *and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, 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, goodwill toward men!"* So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, *"Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."* And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. *And when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child [Lk 2: 8-18].*

Breaking news is a current event that broadcasters feel warrants the interruption of scheduled programming and/or current news in order to report its details.¹ Most of us are familiar with *CNN Breaking News* which has covered developing stories, such as shooting in a school or church and terrorist attacks in busy business or public places. In such cases, broadcasters set aside their scheduled or ongoing programmes so as to draw viewers' attention to the developing story.

Two thousand years ago, a child was born to a poor unknown couple in Bethlehem in Judea (in modern Israel). The child was born in a manger because there was no room for them in the inns. There was no electricity. There was no cable network. But soon enough, visitors started to pour in to pay homage to the new child. Who broke the news to them? Let us find out from today's study.

¹ <https://www.definitions.net/definition/breaking+news>

1. Background: Breaking News- the Saviour is born!

Mary was a teenager who was betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter. Before they could come together, Joseph discovered that his wife was pregnant, a ground for breaking off the engagement [**Deut. 24: 1**]. However, being an upright man, Joseph opted to shield her away from public disgrace. As he thought of those things, an angel appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Joseph woke up and took to Mary as his wife [**Matt. 1: 18-21**].

As the time drew near for the baby to be born, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, decreed a census which required people to be registered in their city of origin. Therefore, Joseph, of the lineage of David, was required to be registered in Bethlehem. We are told that he *went up* with his wife from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, to the city of David [**Lk 2: 1-5**]. That is a journey of 80 miles² (128 kilometres) for a pregnant woman- on hilly ground, on the back of a horse. Let us pay attention to the following aspects of the nativity story:

a) *Jesus was born in obscurity*

On arrival in Bethlehem, Mary went into labour. They could not get accommodation in any of the inns because they had all been overbooked. So, they hurried into a stable where she gave birth to Jesus. They wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger [**Lk 2: 6-7**]. Born in obscurity, that should ordinarily be the end of the story.

b) *God announced the news to the world!*

In the country side of Bethlehem, there were some shepherds living out in the fields at night, keeping watch over their flock. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They became very afraid. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold *I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people*. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.” The angel described where they would find Him-the Child wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger [**vv. 8-12**].

Suddenly, there was with that angel a great multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying [**vv. 13-14**]:

Glory to God in the highest;

² <https://aleteia.org/2017/01/24/biblical-travel-how-far-to-where-and-what-about-the-donkey/>

And on earth peace, goodwill toward men.

After the angels had left, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see the thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” With haste, they went into Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, with the Babe lying in a manger. After they had seen Him, they spread the news, “and all those who heard it marvelled at those things which were told them by the shepherds [who] returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them” [vv. 16-20].

Soon, the breaking news went far. For example, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For *we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him.*” On hearing this, Herod the king and all his people were troubled. He gathered all the chief priests and scribes together and inquired of them where the Christ would be born. He was told it had been prophesied that it would be in Bethlehem of Judea. Herod told the wise men to look for Him in Bethlehem and bring him word so that he could also go and worship Him. As soon as they had left the king, the star which they had seen in the East went before them and led them to where the young Child was. They rejoiced on seeing the Child and His parents. They fell down and worshipped Him and presented Him with gold (symbolizing God in flesh), frankincense (holiness, righteousness) and myrrh (suffering and affliction)³ [Matt. 2: 1-12].

From the forgoing, it is clear that it was God Himself who announced the birth of His Son, Jesus, to the world by way of breaking news. How did He break the news to you?

2. Have you heard the news?

Let us relate that story to the modern believer as follows:

a) *How did you hear the news?*

Christmas day is generally regarded as marking the birth of Jesus. It is marked in over 160 countries around the world.⁴ During the season, people decorate their homes and churches with Christmas trees and sing Christmas carols. The day is marked as a public holiday (work-free day). But does that mean that you have heard the news of the birth of Christ?

Remarkably, God did not reveal the birth of Jesus to religious or political leaders of the time but to unknown shepherds in the wilderness and star-

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/gold-frankincense-myrrh.html>

⁴ <https://www.reference.com/holidays-celebrations/many-countries-celebrate-christmas-85cf4c25686082ab>

gazers from another country. How did you hear the news of the birth of Jesus? Have you even heard of it?

To hear the news is to know who Jesus represents- the Saviour of the world. The angel told the shepherds, “There is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord” [Lk 2: 11]. The wise men from the East came to Jerusalem to ask for “He who has been born King of the Jews” [Matt. 2: 2]. For most of us, Christmas is not to mark the birth of Jesus but to enjoy oneself and exchange gifts.⁵ Have you ever attended a birthday party where the celebrant is not invited? The Christmas decorations and gifts are for us, not for Jesus! Some of us do attend church services without realizing the significance of the occasion. Therefore, it can be concluded that most of us have not heard the news!

Jesus once told His disciples, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you” [Jn 15: 16]. Therefore, it takes only God to give us the privilege to hear the news and its significance.

b) *What have you done with the news?*

When the shepherds heard the news of the birth of the Messiah, they abandoned their flock in the wilderness and went to look for Him. When the wise men saw the star (a sign of a major event, the birth of a king), they gave up everything and went looking for Him with expensive gifts. How about you?

Many of us have heard the news and received water baptism, but have we given up sinning? Have we followed Him in Spirit and in truth? Jesus once told somebody, “Follow Me.” He responded, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” [Lk 9: 57-62]. ***Total surrender to the will of God- that is the measure of having heard the news.***

c) *How do you show gratitude for the privilege to hear the news?*

After the shepherds had seen the Baby Jesus in the manger, they made widely known “the saying which was told them concerning this Child.” They returned, “glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told them” [Lk 2:18-20]. It is a rare privilege for us to hear from God on any matter. It is not because we are the most righteous or the most talented among our peers. That is why we must show appreciation and gratitude. We must use such privileges to glorify God.

⁵ http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_1/PDFs/WhoseMerryChristmas.pdf

We must use it to honour and glorify God. We must use it to win more souls for His kingdom.

Honouring Christ depends on the Jesus that you know.⁶ Take the case of the Samaritan woman who came to draw water at a well [**Jn 4: 1-42**]. When Jesus asked her to give Him a drink, her answers suggested that she saw before her a possible Jewish suitor [**vv. 11-15**]. Then, Jesus asked her to go and call her husband. She said that she had none. When Jesus revealed to her that she was living with her sixth husband, she replied, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.” She began to relate to Him as a religious leader [**16-20**]. Then Jesus raised the bar by showing her that true worshippers will worship God in spirit and in truth. She responded, “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus replied, “I who speak to you am He.” She threw away her water pot and ran to her village to tell her people of the Christ [**21-42**]. So, as you honour Jesus, show Him to others as the Messiah, not the bread winner or the religious leader.

Have you heard the news? Have you told it to others- for their salvation? That is the challenge for true believers.

3. Conclusion: The last breaking news is on the way!

Towards the end of His earthly ministry, the disciples asked Jesus, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” Among the many things He mentioned, the following should be noted [**Matt. 24: 1-31**]:

- * False Christs will come and deceive many
- * There will be wars and rumours of war- nations will rise against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms
- * There will be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places
- * Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many
- * This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

So, one of these days, unexpectedly, the sign of the coming Christ will appear in heaven and “all the tribes of the earth” will see Him, “coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” He will send His angels with a great sound of the trumpet. They will gather together His elect from the four corners of the world. *Of that day and hour, only God the Father knows.*

That is the last breaking news- and it is on the way!

⁶ http://www.bibleresourcecentre.com/Volume_12/WhichJesusdoyouknow.pdf