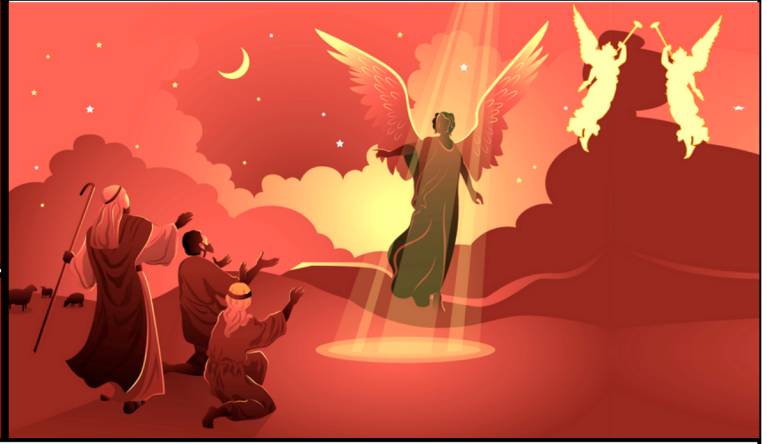


# COGA NEWS



## WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

- Shepherds: Privileged and Obligated
- Upcoming Events
- A Little Something to Laugh About



## SHEPHERDS: PRIVILEGED AND OBLIGATED

*Bishop Cecil Reid*



**The birth of Jesus drew the angels from heaven** (Luke 2: 8-14). How amazed the angels must have been when they saw the Creator born as a creature, the Word coming as a speechless baby. The best commentary on this is 2 Corinthians 8:9, and the best response from our hearts is wonder and worship. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).

The first announcement of the Messiah's birth was given by an angel to some anonymous shepherds. Why shepherds? Why not priests or scribes? By visiting the shepherds, the angel revealed the grace of God toward mankind. Shepherds were really outcasts in Israel. Their work not only made them ceremonially unclean, but it kept them away from the temple for weeks at a time so that they could not be made clean. God does not call the rich and mighty; He calls the poor and the lowly (Luke 1:51-53 1 Cor 1:26-29).

*Fear  
Not!*

The Messiah came to be both the Good Shepherd (John 10) and the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world (John 1:29). Perhaps these shepherds were caring for the flocks that would provide sacrifices for the temple services. It was fitting that the good news about God's Shepherd and Lamb be given first to humble shepherds.

### **Shepherds are not easily fooled.**

Shepherds are not easily fooled. They are practical men of the world who have little to do with fantasy. If they said that they saw angels and went and found the Messiah, then you could believe them. God selected hard-working men to be the first witnesses that His Son had come into the world.

First, one angel appeared (Gabriel?) and gave the glad announcement; and then a chorus of angels joined him and gave an anthem of praise. For the first time in centuries, the glory of God returned to earth. If brave shepherds were afraid of what they saw and heard, then you can be sure it was real!

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**"Fear not!"** is one of the key themes of the Christmas story (Luke 1:13, 30, 74; and Matt. 1:20). Literally the angel said, "I announce to you good news, a great joy which shall be to all the people." He used the word which means **"to preach the Good News"** a word Luke uses often in both his Gospel and in the Book of Acts. We see here Luke's emphasis on a worldwide Gospel: the Good News is for everybody, not just the Jews.



The Jewish word *shalom* (peace) means much more than a truce in the battles of life. It means well-being, health, prosperity, security, soundness, and completeness. It has to do more with character than circumstances. Life was difficult at that time just as it is today. Taxes were high, unemployment was high, morals were slipping lower, and the military state was in control. Roman law, Greek philosophy, and even Jewish religion could not meet the needs of men's hearts. Then, God sent His Son!

The angels praised God at Creation (Job 38: 7), and now they praised Him at the beginning of the new creation. The whole purpose of the plan of salvation is "glory to God" (see Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). God's glory had dwelt in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34) and in the temple (2 Chron. 7:1-3) but had departed because of the nation's sin (1 Sam 4:21; Ezek. 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:22-23).

Now God's glory was returning to earth in the person of His Son (John 1:14). That lowly manger was a holy of holies because Jesus was there!



***His birth drew the shepherds from the fields*** (Luke 2: 15-20). The phrase "even unto Bethlehem" suggests that these men were located some distance away, but they were willing to make the trip in order to see the newborn Messiah. Certainly, they arranged for others to care for their flocks while they hastened to Bethlehem. Halford Luccock called this "the first Christmas rush," but it was certainly different from the Christmas rushes we see today!

*The verb "found" in Luke 2:16 means "found after a search." The shepherds knew what to look for: a newborn Baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And they found Him!*

*They worshiped Him and marveled at God's grace and goodness and the miracle He had wrought for them.*

**These shepherds are good examples for us to imitate today:**

1. They received by faith the message God sent them and then responded with immediate obedience.
2. After finding the baby, they reported the good news to others, "glorifying and praising God." They took the place of the angels! (Luke 2:13-14)
3. Then they humbly returned to their duties, new men going back to the same old job.

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For some reason, shepherds were not permitted to testify in court, but God used these humble shepherds to be the first human witnesses that the prophecy had been fulfilled and the Messiah had been born. The angels have never experienced the grace of God, so they can't bear witness as we can. Telling others about the Saviour **is a solemn obligation** as well as **a great privilege**, and we who are believers/shepherds must be faithful in both. Think about it.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### DECEMBER

- 3rd > 2023 Planning Meeting (Zoom)
- 17th > Pastor & 1st Lady Vow Renewal
- 18th > Christmas Program
- 25th > No Service
- 31st > Watch Night Service

### JANUARY

- **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**
- Daniel's 21 Day Fast

Find more information on [www.cogainc.org](http://www.cogainc.org)



## A LITTLE SOMETHING TO LAUGH ABOUT

- "I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note on it saying 'Toys not included.'" —Bernard Manning
- "People are so worried about what they eat between Christmas and the New Year, but they really should be worried about what they eat between the New Year and Christmas."
- "There are a lot of things money can't buy. Not one of them is on my son's list." —Milton Berle
- "Christmas is the season when you buy this year's gifts with next year's money."

