

Recap of 12/22/19 (Luke 2:8-20):

1. The first announcement of Jesus' birth was to shepherds (of lowly status, considered ignorant because they were not schooled in the Law, social outcasts of the day, not the wise, the strong, the affluent (1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Jeremiah 9:23-24). Quite possibly they were tending the sacrificial lambs which would be used at the Temple in Jerusalem (7 miles away). Jesus was called by John the Baptist, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
2. The announcement to the shepherds referred to Jesus' purpose (Savior) and His person (Christ the Lord—the Messiah who is God).
3. Two prominent messages attended the announcements of Jesus' birth. First, "do not be afraid" (Luke 1:13, 29: 2:10; Matthew 1:20-21). "Salvation replaces fear with joy" (Wiersbe). The second message was one of the possibility of peace. "...in Christ alone can peace be secured—peace with God, peace for the human heart, peace between men, peace for the world" (Erdman). The message of the angels, "and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests," "...proclaims a grace of God that is Good News and the promise of joy to all! In Christ the Savior, man's deepest need is met. Through Christ, God's favor is poured out on all who will but believe (Richards).
4. "The tragic gap between God and man had to be bridged, and there was only one way. Jesus would have to come to earth as the second Adam and live a perfect life in our place. He would have to bear the punishment for our rebellion and endure the unthinkable—the Father's rejection. It happened at that horrible ninth hour on the day of his crucifixion, when, in a loud voice, he cried, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' ('My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?') (Mark 15:34). This was Jesus's most painful moment of anguish as he took on himself the tragedy of our separation from God. This moment really was the epicenter of the Christmas story. It was why Jesus came. It was why the angels rejoiced at his coming. He came to be the temporarily separated Son so that we can be the eternally accepted children of God. Now, that's a story worth celebrating!" (Tripp)