

Christmas Eve

GLORIFIED SHEPHERDS

Luke 2:1-20

Christmas Eve

Analysis by Bill White

1In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own town to be registered. 4Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was a descendant from the house and family of David. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then the angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see-I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign of for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

15When the angels had left them, and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us. 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

DIAGNOSIS: Light Exposing Darkness

Step One: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Shepherds Terrified by the Glory of the Lord*

The shepherds are literally in the dark. It is nighttime and the shepherds are keeping watch over their flock. Suddenly, there is an angel of the Lord standing before them. Around them shines the glory of the Lord. A terrifying experience indeed!

Step Two: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Shepherds Exposed by the Glory of the Lord*

It is terrifying enough for the shepherds to suddenly have an angel of the Lord standing in front of them and to be surrounded by the glory of the Lord. But even worse, the glory of the Lord shines right through them, revealing the true darkness of the nature within them, making them aware of their sinfulness before God.

(In the dim light of this world we may compare ourselves to others quite favorably. We may even believe "in light" of our self-analysis that God looks upon us favorably too. But in the light of the glory of the Lord our sin before Almighty God is quite evident. The terrifying truth revealed in the presence of

God's glory is that all too often there is within us no real fear, love, and trust in the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.)

Step Three: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Shepherds Mortified by the Glory of the Lord*

Worse still for these shepherds, being in the presence of an angel of the Lord and being surrounded by the glory of the Lord enlightens them as to their very real need of a savior from sin, evil, and death. Without him their future is mortifying-that is, deadly.

PROGNOSIS: Light Overcoming Darkness

Step Four: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Shepherds' Fears Crossed Out*

But the angel of the Lord has a message for these shepherds: "Do not be afraid; for see-I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign of for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" (vv. 10-12).

Fear not shepherds. The child you will find this night is God's rescue from the consequences of sin. The child you will find this night will conquer Satan and his forces of evil. The child you will find this night will give his life on a cross and rise again, destroying the power of death for all eternity. The child you will find this night is God-in-flesh, born of the house of David; he is the Savior, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord.

Step Five: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Shepherds Filled with the Glory of the Lord*

What's more shepherds, the child you will find tonight has come to save you. This child has come to be your Savior and Lord. He comes to exchange your darkness for his Light. He comes to

exchange your faltering and fickle faith for true faith. He comes to exchange your death for his life. He comes to fill you with the glory of the Lord, that it might shine in you.

Step Six: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Shepherds Shine forth the Glory of the Lord*

Better still shepherds, this glory of the Lord that shines in you will also shine through you. It will move you to join the multitude of the heavenly host in praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!" This glory of the Lord that fills you will outshine the fears of this life, empowering you to go into your world glorifying and praising God for all you have heard and seen (v. 20).