

# SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELDS

Luke 2:9–14

5

## ANGELS

- reflected glory of God illuminates the campsite
- angel of the Lord may be Gabriel (cf. Lk 1:11, 19)
- announces the birth of the Messiah
  - he will redeem ("Savior") and reign ("Lord")
- large angelic army sings about peace
  - only one bicolon of angelic hymn
  - hymn is about salvation (propitiation and reconciliation)
    - *"Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace with men of favor."*
    - not peace on earth among men but **peace with men with whom God is pleased** ("not bring peace, but a sword" Mt 10:34)
    - local musicians played outside the house when male babies were born

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## SHEPHERDS' FIELD

- 3/4 mile SE of Bethlehem
- lived in Beit Sahur ("House of the Shepherds") one mile E of Bethlehem
- below the snow line; steep ascent to Bethlehem
  - caves in the neighborhood
  - near Herodium (Herod's the Great's tomb)
  - near the Field of Boaz where Ruth gleaned (one mile E of Bethlehem)
    - David tended sheep nearby
    - slept in a circle with a fire in the middle and took turns watching the sheep
- circles of stones filled with rushes for beds

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## BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

- by Gabriel before birth to Mary and Joseph (Mt 1:20–23; Lk 1:26–33)
- by Mary to Elizabeth and Zacharias (Lk 1:39–56)
  - by an angel after birth to the world (Lk 2:9–12)
  - from heaven to believing Jews and then to unbelieving Gentiles
  - promise of a Messiah fulfilled
- shepherds left before the Magi came



2

## SHEPHERDS

- hated by the religious leaders and common people
- reputation for theft and trespassing
- pilfered wool, milk, and lambs from the sheep-owners
  - despised trade like tanners, tax collectors, and physicians
- not able to keep ceremonial law or attend the synagogue regularly
- not allowed to testify in court or be a judge (denied civil rights)
  - often slaves (Lk 17:7)
  - tradition says four shepherds from Beit Sahur: Misael, Acheel, Cyriacus, and Stephanus
- **God cares about the outcasts of society!**

3

## TEMPLE FLOCKS

- not ordinary shepherds
- the Temple had their own private flocks
- for morning and evening sacrifices (Shek. 7:4)
- large flock—one man can handle 50–100 sheep
  - pastured near Bethlehem
  - in the fields all year
  - cold, rainy winters—40° nights and possibility of snow (Gen 31:40)
- kept watch in a tower called Migdal Eder on the road to Jerusalem
- believed Messiah will be revealed from Migdal Eder
  - **shepherds of sheep destined for sacrifice are the first to see the Lamb of God!**
- spread the word of Messiah's birth in the Temple