



“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Luke 2:10)

Have you found the joy of which the angels spoke?

Or have you mistaken happiness for joy? Do you long for joy?

You are not alone.

The Shepherd and the Angels

Luke 2:8-20

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

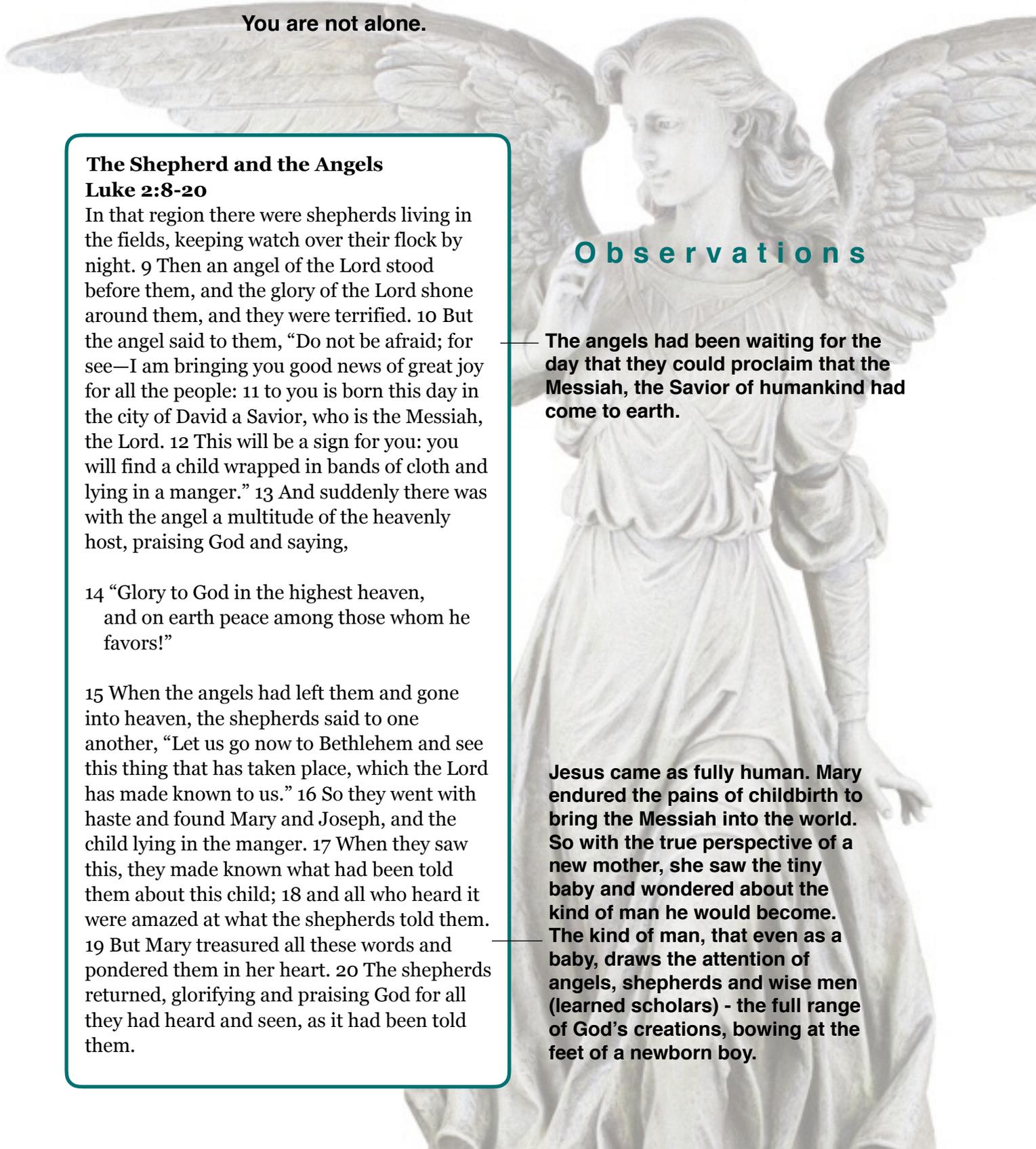
14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

15 When 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.” 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Observations

The angels had been waiting for the day that they could proclaim that the Messiah, the Savior of humankind had come to earth.

Jesus came as fully human. Mary endured the pains of childbirth to bring the Messiah into the world. So with the true perspective of a new mother, she saw the tiny baby and wondered about the kind of man he would become. The kind of man, that even as a baby, draws the attention of angels, shepherds and wise men (learned scholars) - the full range of God's creations, bowing at the feet of a newborn boy.



* Application for abundant living:

God	God invites everyone to the celebration.
The Kingdom	The kingdom has a great equalizing power.
Personal Growth	Personal growth begins with an encounter with Jesus Christ. (Expect special messengers!)
Relationships	When we strive for happiness, we can cause our relationships to crumble during difficult times. Yet when we find the joy of our salvation, we can endure the trials of human life and even grow in our faith in God.
Our Mission	We are called to tell everybody of the amazing things we have witnessed.

Further Study for a deeper understanding:

Sorrow will turn into joy - John 16:20-22

Using a Bible Concordance, conduct a word study of "happy" and then of "joy". Make note of how they are used in context. Then see if you have any shared experiences with your discoveries within the scriptures.

Verses for Memory: Luke 2:10
Matthew 2:10
John 17:13
James 1:2
Philippians 1:25

Questions for reflection or group discussion:

"One filled with joy preaches without preaching." — Mother Teresa

What are you preaching to those around you every day?

Is it the Gospel of Christ or the Gospel of self?

Does the person with whom you are in closest relation (i.e. spouse, parent, sibling, mentor) agree with your answer to the above questions?

Final Thought:

What is God teaching you this Christmas?