

The Shepherds Find Jesus

the second see Acts 5 : 37. *Cyrenius* (Quirinius) was (Roman) governor of Syria; the Roman province to which Palestine belonged. It seems to have been a fixed policy to take a periodical census of the empire, probably about every fourteen years, and this enrolment was one. *Every one to his own city* (Rev. Ver.); following the Jewish custom of making the registration at the old family home.

Vs. 4-7. *Joseph*; the husband of Mary (Matt. 1 : 24), and during the lifetime of Jesus regarded as His father, Matt. 13 : 55; Luke 4 : 22; John 1 : 45; 6 : 42. *From Galilee*; the most northerly of the three provinces of Palestine. *Out of . . . Nazareth*; a town resting in a basin of hills. From the summit of these the eye could look out on the road from Jerusalem with its annual throng of pilgrims, the road from Egypt with its merchants going up and down, and the road from Damascus with its richly laden caravans. At Nazareth the birth of Jesus had been announced, ch. 1 : 26. *City of David*. See 1 Sam. 17 : 12, 58. From the character of David are derived the chief features in the description of the Messiah, the long-expected King of God's people. (See Matt. 1 : 1, 20; 9 : 27; 15 : 22; 21 : 9; John 7 : 42; Rom. 1 : 3; 2 Tim. 2 : 8; Rev. 5 : 5; 22 : 16.) *With Mary*; although in the Roman census women were not obliged to come to be enrolled in person. *Days . . . fulfilled* (Rev. Ver.) It is impossible to say how long they were in Bethlehem before the birth of Jesus. *First-born son*. The words would lead us to suppose that Mary afterwards had other children, sons and daughters (see Mark 3 : 31-35). *Swaddling clothes*; strips of cloth three or four inches wide and several feet long, wound around the child. *No room . . . in the inn*. Besides the ordinary business travel, the inn would be filled up with strangers, who, like Joseph and Mary, had come to be enrolled and had arrived before them.

II. The Angels, 8-14.

Vs. 8, 9. *Shepherds . . . in the field*. Luke's Gospel always brings out the Saviour's sympathy for the poor: the announcement of the birth is made to humble country folk. *Keeping watch*, etc.; against thieves and wild beasts. In the valleys the winter nights may

not have been too cold for the flocks, so it is not impossible that Jesus was born about our Christmas time, but that is all that can be said. *An angel* (Rev. Ver.) of the Lord. Angels are the messengers of God, Ps. 104 : 4. *Glory of the Lord*; the heavenly brightness which is a sign of the presence of God or of heavenly beings, 2 Cor. 3 : 18. (Compare Luke 9 : 31, 32, and also Ex. 16 : 10; 24 : 16, 17; 40 : 34; Lev. 9 : 6, 23.)

Vs. 10-12. *Fear not*. No one could see God and live (Ex. 33 : 20); and any divine manifestation would naturally produce awe. *Good tidings* (words of the same meaning as "gospel") of great joy. Joy is one of the surest fruits of a preached gospel. The gospel, or glad tidings, is the birth of Jesus. *City of David*; and so to fulfil all that David had hoped for, and that God had promised His people in Him. *A Saviour*. The promise of deliverance from sin and oppression rang through Israel's history (see ch. 1 : 66-75, 77-79), like a church bell breaking on the ear of a lost traveler in a thick wood. *Christ*; the Messiah, the anointed King of the true Israel. *The Lord*; and therefore full of power to make this salvation complete. *Sign . . . a babe* (Rev. Ver.); not a glorious earthly monarch, but a weak child. Only the arm of the Lord Himself could bring strength out of such weakness.

Vs. 13, 14. *Suddenly*; to confirm this most unlikely message. *Heavenly host*; inhabitants of heaven, whose song shows that the salvation of men is the theme of the "choir invisible." *Praising God*. All salvation leads men to give glory to the Father for His marvelous lovingkindness. *Glory to God*, etc. In the Revised Version there are only two causes: (a) Glory in heaven ("the highest"); (b) Peace upon earth; but this peace is only among men who have found favor in God's light. Thus reconciliation through God's mercy is the theme of the gospel, resounding with glad song in heaven and awakening joy in earth.

III. The Shepherds, 15-20.

Vs. 15, 16. *It came to pass*, etc. As long as the divine melody of peace lasted, they listened. Then they proceeded to verify it, leaving their flocks and going across the