

“Down To Earth”

“A Miraculous Story with an All-Star Cast!”

“The Shepherds: Supporting Characters”

“That night there were shepherds staying in their fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.”

Luke 2:8

A. God created the greatest Story...

1. God specifically picked each of the characters for this Story!
2. Each character had special significance...there are no accidents in God's plan!
3. If God's original creation was spectacular, imagine His plan for the redemption of all mankind!
4. Every detail was part of the plan with prophetic fulfillment; every detail held deeper meaning!
5. This is His-Story of love for all mankind!

B. The Shepherd...

1. “The duties of the shepherd in an unenclosed country like Israel were very onerous. ‘In early morning he led forth the flock from the fold, marching at its head to the spot where they were pastured. Here he watched them all day, taking care that none of the sheep strayed, and if any for a time eluded his watch and wandered away from the rest, seeking diligently till he found and brought it back. In those lands, sheep require to be supplied regularly with water, and the shepherd for this purpose has to guide them either to some running stream or to wells dug in the wilderness and furnished with troughs. At night, he brought the flock home to the fold, counting them as they passed under the rod at the door to assure himself that none were missing. Nor did his labours always end with sunset. Often, he had to guard the fold through the dark hours from the attack of wild beasts, or the wily attempts of the prowling thief.’” Eastons Bible History
2. Jews were the first shepherds. There were many well-known shepherds: Isaac and Jacob's sons, Abraham, Moses, King David, and many more. However, Egypt's view of shepherds was poor and thus the shepherds became recognized as the lowest social class, even despised by the Rabbis.

3. Sheep were plentiful. Job had 14,000 and Solomon sacrificed 120,000.
4. The shepherd was always on the lookout for sheep needing personal attention and he carried olive oil in a ram's horn for the sick and wounded sheep.
5. When the sheep had to cross the stream, the shepherd led the way with those sheep who were closest to him plunged in first.
6. Sheep are directionally challenged and the shepherd had to keep a close eye on his sheep to keep them from straying.
7. The shepherd is responsible for leading his flock to food. Availability of food is very seasonal and the shepherd might be responsible for providing food in the lean times.
8. The shepherd knows his sheep and the sheep know the shepherd's voice. The shepherd gathers them by calling out to them. Other voices can use the same words, but they will only follow their shepherd.
9. The shepherd never drives his sheep, but only leads them and often walks by their side. He may move to the rear when they get close to home, to make sure he gathers any stragglers.
10. The shepherd will invest hours in seeking after a lost sheep. Upon finding them, he will often gather the exhausted sheep and carry them on his strong shoulders. As a means of affection, the shepherd will gain delight in naming his sheep.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices His life for the sheep.” John 10:11

C. The Shepherds on that Holy Night...

“That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep.” Luke 2:8

1. These shepherds are not remembered by their names, but by the task God had put before them and their experience that one night.
2. These shepherds were watching their flocks at night. They were faithful to their responsibilities.
3. It must have been in the season while weather still permitted them to be in the fields at night rather than the fold.
4. These were not just any shepherds. These shepherds were watching their sheep close to the city. The location would indicate that these were sacrificial lambs for the Temple.

“I am the good shepherd; I know My own sheep, and they know Me,” John 10:14

D. Shepherds were chosen...

1. Shepherds were chosen to be present at the birth of Christ because they represented so much about the fulfillment of Scripture.

“He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet He never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, He did not open his mouth.” Isaiah 53:7

2. Jesus was called the “Lamb of God.”

“As Jesus walked by, John looked at Him and declared, ‘Look! There is the Lamb of God!’”

3. Jesus would become the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

“It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God.” 1 Peter 1:19

4. We are all the sheep of this Great Shepherd and the work of reaching others is to feed the sheep.

“You are My flock, the sheep of My pasture. You are My people, and I am your God. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken!” Ezekiel 34:31

“A third time he asked him, ‘Simon son of John, do you love Me?’ Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, ‘Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You.’ Jesus said, ‘Then feed my sheep.’” John 21:17

5. Jesus will forever be recognized as the Lamb because of His sacrifice for us.

“No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and His servants will worship Him.” Revelation 22:3

E. So grateful for a “Good Shepherd”...

“The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me.

Your rod and Your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely Your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.” Psalm 23 NLT