

A BABY CHANGES OUR WORLD

Part 5

Shepherds arrive

Suddenly, I'm awakened again – this time by the sound of lambs bleating. Startled, I look up to see a group of shepherds. Two of the shepherd boys are carrying little lambs over their shoulders. They are coming in from the Shepherds Field—slowly approaching the stable cave next to ours.

I see Mary and Joseph at the entrance with their baby laying on the stable's manger. Mary is curled up sleeping on some straw and blankets next to it. She looks exhausted from giving birth several hours ago. Joseph is sitting next to her, but awake and watchful. He stands up with his staff in his hand when he sees all the shepherds advancing.



Fig. 1. Art - Shepherds arrive with their sheep at the stable cave.

It's the middle of the night, but the stars and the partial moon light-up these hills. Strangely, a glow surrounds all the shepherds, the baby, Joseph and the stable cave.

I recognize one of the shepherd boys—it's Joab! I met him and his family in the Shepherds Field last year when Dad took me along to graze our flock of sheep. He's friendly and about nine years old, my age.

I look around me and find that Mom had returned after helping Mary deliver her baby. She is sleeping soundly. I quietly awaken her and point to the stable. She gasps and is amazed at what we are witnessing. "Matthias, This *IS* a very special baby," Mom says in a low tone.

I turn to her and softly ask why she said that, but she just puts her hand up over her mouth and replies, "It's a secret for now—I will tell you why later."

A secret? I wonder what that's all about. What does she mean?

All the shepherds bow down in front of Joseph, Mary, and their child. The baby lies in the manger that was hewn from rock and stands at the cave's entrance. Mary awakens and seems surprised but not startled. She stands and places her hand on her baby.

The baby is wrapped in swaddling cloth to protect him—as is our custom. The straw also cushions him and keeps him from the coolness of the stone of the stable's outdoor manger. The fresh air outside is better for the newborn than inside the stable cave.

We can hear the shepherds speaking as they stand close to the manger.

The shepherd leading the group explains:
“Shalom. We were tending our flocks in the field tonight and suddenly saw Angels in the sky surrounded by a bright light. One Angel approached us and said:

‘Fear not. I bring you news of great joy for all people! Today in the town of David, a Savior, which is the Messiah, Christ, has been born unto you. This will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.’

We immediately came to Bethlehem to see what has happened, as the Lord told us. Now we have found him just as the Angel said.”



Fig. 2. Art – Angels appear to Shepherds in the Shepherds Field.

Joseph and Mary do not seem surprised about Angels being close by. They invite a few of the shepherds at a time for a closer view of the baby in the manger crib. Joseph lights an oil lamp.

The shepherds reverently kneel and are ecstatic at what they see. Then the two shepherd boys present Joseph with the little white lambs they carried over their shoulders. A third shepherd leads their mother sheep to him as a gift.

Mom and I are curious and arise to quietly move closer and look for ourselves.

Wow! I recognize the purple color tint of the cloth wrapped around the baby. It's from the wool that Mom had woven and dyed for us. I laugh—she must have given it to Mary and Joseph to wrap the newborn baby. The baby is clothed with the wool that was sheared from our family's sheep before they were stolen. How wonderful!

The baby awakens now. A soft glow of light illuminates his face. He is beautiful. Just looking at him brings us a feeling of happiness and uplifts our spirits. He smiles at us with his chubby cheeks and makes some baby sounds through his lips. He's as cute as a new baby can be.

The shepherds also appear happy and joyful at the sight of this baby. They continue to tell Joseph and Mary that hundreds of Angels appeared this night: "Those messengers of God exclaimed,

'Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace, good will toward all!'"

My Mother and I approach closer to the manger. When Joseph sees us, he pleads: "Please, Rachel, would you allow Matthias to take care of these two little lambs and the mother ewe? This generous family of shepherds gave them as gifts from their own flock."

Mom nods approval to me, so I pick up the two little lambs and cuddle them. They lick my face. They are so cute, soft, and playful. They appear unblemished. As I happily carry them off, their mother ewe follows. I take them into a nearby small cave in this hill and tie some rope around their necks and through the bushes at the cave's entrance to serve as a temporary fence. They appear sleepy. The mother ewe will suckle her lambs. I will bring water and feed her at dawn.

What splendid gifts for the shepherds to give the baby and his family—it is from their hearts and livelihood. As I think about it, everyone here is giving the baby a special gift as well as their love, caring, and time.

One of the shepherds pulls out a wooden flute from his coat and asks Joseph and Mary if he may play a soft melody. They agree readily. Soon we are surrounded with music which adds to the delight of this event.



Fig. 3. Art - Black & White Drawing of Shepherds at Nativity of Jesus.

Sarah awakens and walks over to join us while holding a sleeping Isaac. Mom hugs the three of us—what a delightful feeling of love and peace surrounds us!

The shepherds repeat to us their story about the appearance of the Angels. Sarah turns to look at me and confidently boasts that she was right when she had told me that she had heard some voices in the Shepherds Field earlier this night. In fact, that happened soon after the baby was born.

Joab comes over to me and says “Shalom, Matthias.”

I remember Joab well. He taught me how to use a sling shot to scare away the wild dogs when they tried to attack our sheep for food. I did not have a good aim, but he was very accurate. He would laugh when I called him “King David.” David had developed his skill with a slingshot as a shepherd boy and later felled Goliath who had insulted our God and our country.

“Shalom, Joab. Yes. It’s great to see you again. I’ve been very busy in town working as a stable boy here, so I don’t get out to the Shepherds Field anymore. How’s your sling shot, ‘King David?’”

We both giggle at our little insider joke. Then he responds somberly, “Matthias, I still feel so sad about what happened to your father. I want you to know our family cares and still prays for your family. You look taller and stronger than last year. I’m glad your family has survived that tragedy.”

“Thank you, Joab. And how is your family?”

“They are healthy and have been prosperous this year. The Shepherds Field has abundant grass and has been quiet as usual. That is, until tonight. It was a shock to see such a bright light in the night sky and then the Angels—they even spoke to us. I was scared.”

“Their first words were,

‘Fear not, do not be afraid.’

Those words kept me from running away or using my sling shot—anyway, I don’t think an Angel could be hurt by a stone.”



Fig. 4. Art - Shepherds rejoice after appearance of the Angels.

Joab continues, “My Dad handled the situation very bravely and knelt before the Angels. Then we all did the same and listened carefully. Afterwards, there were many more of them appearing and I heard them repeating,

‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests!’

Yes, a peacefulness came upon all of us. A few of the Angels appeared to be as young as we are, some appeared older. All of them looked very happy. It was a wonderful sight. I wish you could have seen it.”

I excitedly reply, “Yes, I do wish I had been there! Maybe they will return another time. We learned about Angels in our synagogue school and how they would appear at some important events described in scripture.”

Joab laughs, “There you go again, referencing scripture. You should be a Rabbi, Matthias. But, this time your answer may explain the mystery surrounding this child, so thanks.”

While everyone is talking about the Angels, they are still looking at the baby and listening to the melodic notes of the flute player.

Joab asks me, “Have you noticed the stars just before dawn and after sunset? They are very unusual. We have been watching them in the sky from the Shepherds Field for weeks and noticed how two stars are moving closer together. Today they seem to be like one star—and show a very bright light.”

‘Yes. Saw them! I wonder if they’re a sign like the stars mentioned in our scriptures. There are prophecies about stars appearing at such an event.’”



Fig. 5. Art – Shepherds attending their flock see the Star of Bethlehem.

I continue and ask Joab, “Did those Angels really say “a Savior, a Messiah,” was born tonight?”

“True.” Joab answers. “They really did say that. They clearly meant it was this baby and how to find him. Nevertheless, how can he be a Messiah? A little baby is not a Messiah warrior king.”

I remind him, “But King David was born as a baby in these same hills of Bethlehem and became a great warrior for Israel. So, it is possible—it happened before.”

“OK, you’re right, Matthias. I wonder....” Joab appears to be lost in thought.

Neither of us understand what the full meaning of these events are. Maybe we are too young.

We move further back as more shepherds arrive to take their turn to view the baby. They bow to the child and to Mary, and then speak with Joseph. Mary now holds the baby in her arms. What a beautiful and heart-warming sight!

The shepherds praise God for this wonderful event, and thank Him for the Angels who told them where to search.

Even though everyone seems to be talking, we all are speaking in hushed tones.

Several shepherds recognize Mom, and talk with her off to the side.

What peacefulness, love and joy the arrival of this baby has brought to everyone here.

Now the dawn approaches and the shepherds begin to withdraw and return to their flocks. They are very respectful and quiet.

They know they must leave because the townspeople do not like shepherds. Many in the town think shepherds are dirty, lazy, dishonest and uneducated. But they're not!

Just as my father did, they always lead their sheep to pastures in all kinds of weather – heat, cold, rain, mud – and protect them from harm, thieves, and beasts. So, of course it is dirty work, hard work. Many shepherds are poor.

However, a few studied and know scripture as well as some of the townspeople.

It seems unfair that these shepherds are not even allowed to enter the Temple of Jerusalem. The Temple authorities consider them "ritually unclean" because of their work in the fields. This makes me angry! Some of these shepherds in the Bethlehem area are responsible to protect the same sheep that will become the sacred sacrifices at the Temple.

I notice that a few townspeople arise in time to see this very strange sight of shepherds gathered around the stable cave. They stare at us, but they do not come over—they stay distant.

As the shepherds leave, they walk by those townspeople and share the message from the Angels regarding this baby. They praise and thank God as they relate what happened here!

Some townspeople scoff and laugh at them and say, “We are amazed and curious. We just don’t know what to think or say about your Angel story. Perhaps you were drinking too much wine?”

What an insult! I feel that they want to disregard what is told them because of their prejudice against shepherds.

The shepherds slowly return to their flocks which their families are grazing and protecting in the Shepherds Field.



Fig. 6. Art – Shepherds bow to Jesus with Mary and Joseph at the Nativity. One plays music, others bring sheep to the stable cave.

I turn to Joab and say, “Shalom.”

He replies, “Shalom, until we meet again, which I hope is soon. Please come to visit us when you can. You know where we graze our flock, Matthias—my friend.” We clasp each other’s hands and hug before he leaves.

I miss him and his loving family. I miss even more the times I spent with my Dad and his flock in the Shepherds Field.

Soon, Mom will have to bake the morning bread for the guests at the Inn. Before she leaves, she leads Sarah and carries Isaac to our home next door to tuck them into their blankets. I'm wide-awake because of all the exciting things that have occurred. So, I tell Mom that I'll just start my chores now, as I usually do before dawn.

I begin thinking about what the Angels had told the shepherds—this baby is our “Savior, the Messiah of Israel.” Hmm... then, what Dad told me about God's promise to King David has been fulfilled today!

Dad had me memorize what he believed about the Messiah: “From David's descendants the Messiah is to come to rescue Israel, to reunite the tribes, to usher in universal peace, and to fulfill many of our people's needs.”

Wonder if that is the future of this baby?

I turn to look at the baby again, but Mary is nursing him. Joseph turned around one of the wooden mangers to set it inside the cave's entrance for Mary's privacy.

It's overwhelming to think that our Messiah was born right here. I hope his family will reside in Bethlehem. It will be fun to grow up as he grows up. It will be fun to see, help and play with this child and my brother Isaac.

I will teach them all I know about animals, especially about sheep. There are many things about sheep that apply to our daily lives.

I can teach them about the stars in the sky, about these fields, and about the farms around us. Our friendships will be close.

Well, the twilight is yielding to the approaching dawn. It's time to feed the ewe and bring water to the lambs and her. Therefore, I grab an armful of feed and grass and pick up a jug of water to carry to them.

Walking to their cave, I look up into the sky to see if there are any Angels, but none appear. Just like our ever-present God, Angels are usually invisible—but now I can feel their presence.

The sky is still full of thousands of stars. They are shining and twinkling as they always do on such a gorgeous, cloudless night sky.

Towards the eastern horizon, it looks like some of those moving stars, those planets, which have moved closer together since I looked yesterday. What a breathtaking sight!

I have a great idea! I'll tell my play friends in town everything that happened when get together on Saturday night after the Sabbath. Do I have a lot to tell them. Wow, it will be exciting! Praise God for a Messiah!

Oh, oh! What if they won't believe me? Maybe they'll make fun of my story and tease me. And then they won't let me join them to play our games. Now, I'm not so sure I want to tell them. I'll just wait until they ask me.

Nevertheless, I saw what I saw, and heard what I heard.

How astonishing that these humble shepherds and me, a lowly stable boy, plus my sister, baby brother, and Mother—a cook—are the first to witness his nativity.

We are celebrating the birth of this special baby—whom Joseph said he will name Jesus! Thank God for all we have seen and heard.

Perhaps there is no room in the Inn nor in the town's homes. However, God made sure there is enough room for everyone to come to meet this baby—he was born in a stable cave in front of a large open field where everyone can come visit and see for themselves.

Apparently, God invited everybody to come visit and see this epic event, the birth of a baby who is changing our world!

I hope everybody will come to see for their selves and to listen to our stories.

----- End of Part 5

**Next, see Figure 7, Art of the Nativity
in postage stamps.**



If questions or comments, please contact the author at:

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Fig. 7. Art: The Nativity - Jesus & Mary, on U.S. Postal Service issued Christmas Postage Stamps.



"Madonna and Child"
by Paolo de Matteis
dating to around 1715.
(1996 Christmas Stamp)



"Virgin and Child"
by Jan Gossaert
dating to around 1531.
(2013 Christmas Stamp)



"Madonna of the Candelabra"
by Italian master Raphael
dating to around 1513.
(2011 Christmas Stamp)



"Madonna of the Carnation"
by Bernardino Luini
dating to around 1515.
(2007 Christmas Stamp)



"Madonna and Sleeping Child"
by Sassoferato (Giovanni Battista Salvi)
dating to around 1640.
(2009 Christmas Stamp)

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A BABY CHANGES OUR WORLD

Part 5

Shepherds arrive

MULTI – DIMENSION LINKS

Click **Buttons/LINKS** to see and hear enjoyable and interesting Music Videos – Traditional, Modern-New, Pop or Classic versions, and Movies (on YouTube).



"Do You Hear What I Hear?"

Sung by Carrie Underwood. Lyrics on screen.



"**Mary's Boy Child**" and "**Oh My Lord**" performed by the disco-pop group Boney M. Lyrics on screen.



"**Jesus, Jesus ... Born of Mary**" is a new Christmas song by Animated Faith. Lyrics in YouTube description.



"**Angels from The Realms of Glory**" features Sissel Kyrkjebø, orchestra, bells and choir of hundreds. Lyrics in YouTube.



"**Angels We Have Heard on High**" List of the Artists and Lyrics shown in YouTube description. Fast beat, pop, great singers.



"**Hope Was Born This Night**" by Sidewalk Prophets with Lyrics in video. Modern music with electric guitars.



"A Baby Changes Everything"
sung by Faith Hill. Lyrics on video.



"Bright Star of Bethlehem" sung
by Melanie McMillan. Beautiful
video with slides of works of art.



"Silent Night" Sung by Jana
Mashonee in Native American
Indian Arapaho language.



"When Love Was Born" sung by
Mark Schultz. Lyrics on screen.



"Little Road To Bethlehem" a
beautiful melody sung by Judy
Collins.



"Christmas Canon Rock" by
Trans-Siberian Orchestra.
Modern soft rock. TSO with
children singing and an amazing
stage light show as well.



"O Come all ye faithful" - BBC
One Show audience took part in
a virtual choir, singing with all
their might to this wonderful
Christmas Carol.



"Mary of Nazareth" a movie on
YouTube. (1hr 42min)

(Continue to next page: **Multi-Dimensions**)

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Part 5

Shepherds arrive

Multi-Dimensions: Click **Buttons/LINKS** to experience Events, Photos, Videos, Bible References, and to see Maps and additional interesting information. Wikipedia presents various viewpoints regarding the topics.



Annunciation to the shepherds – Wikipedia: Shepherds are informed of the birth of the Messiah, Jesus.



Angels of Glory – Wikipedia: Angels appeared to Shepherds to announce the Birth of Jesus.



Shepherds arrive at Nativity of Jesus – Wikipedia: Adoration by the Shepherds of the Bethlehem area represented in Art.



Shepherds - Wikipedia: Shepherds perform many duties.



Nativity Scene - Wikipedia: Origin of the Christmas Nativity Scene.



Swaddling Clothes - Wikipedia: The custom was for newborn babies to be wrapped in swaddling soon after birth.



Shearing Sheep - Wikipedia: Flocks of sheep provided abundant wool for clothes.



King James Version (KJV) with options for audio reading of text about the Angels appearance to the Shepherds according to Gospel of Luke.



New American Bible - Revised Edition: with options for commentary and notes of the Genealogy of Jesus according to Matthew.



New International Version (NIV): Excellent dramatized audio of David's anointing and successful challenge of Goliath. (Click > ► to restart audio) Chapters 16 & 17 of the first book of Samuel, continuous play.



Life of Jesus in the New Testament - Wikipedia: Summary of various views of what Jesus did in his lifetime and how he died and then rose from the dead.



Shepherds' Field with pictures from Custodia Terrae Sanctae, Sanctuary Bethlehem.



Shepherds' Field and Beit Sahour, Israel. See Google **map** and pictures.



Shepherds' Fields, Bethlehem, from Sacred Destinations site. Satellite **map** with zoom. Pictures.



Ancient Israelite Cuisine— Sheep and other foods of Israel and some preparation rules.

Figure # - Photo and Art Credits

Thankful and grateful for courtesy of:

Fig. 1. Art - Shepherds arrive with their sheep at the stable cave.

Jerry Sheppard

<http://soul-reach.blogspot.com/2012/12/christmas-birth-of-christ.html>

Fig. 2. Art – Angels appear to Shepherds in the Shepherds Field.

Shri Mataji

<https://littleganeshas.wordpress.com/2009/12/21/the-birth-of-jesus-christ/>

Fig. 3. Art - Black & White Drawing of Shepherds at Nativity of Jesus.

Public Domain.

Fig. 4. Art - Shepherds rejoice after appearance of the Angels

Saint Mary's Press

<http://www.smp.org/resourcecenter/resource/744/>

Fig. 5. Art – Shepherds attending their flock see the Star of Bethlehem.

E. G. Lewis

<http://eglewis.blogspot.com/2011/12/christmas-shepherds.html>

Fig. 6. Art – Shepherds bow to Jesus with Mary and Joseph at the Nativity. One plays music, others bring sheep to the stable cave.

Valerie Tarico

<http://valerietarico.com/2014/12/09/the-not-so-virgin-birth-of-the-christmas-story/>

Fig. 7. Art: The Nativity - Jesus & Mary, on U. S. Postal Service Christmas series Postage Stamps.

> "Madonna and Child"

by Paolo de Matteis dating to around 1715.

(1996 Christmas Stamp)

<http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2012/pb22349/pdf/pb22349.pdf>

> "Virgin and Child"
by Jan Gossaert dating to around 1531.
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http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2013/pb22371/html/info_005.htm

> "Madonna of the Candelabra"
by Italian master Raphael dating to around 1513.
(2011 Christmas Stamp)
http://about.usps.com/postal-bulletin/2011/pb22319/html/info_007.htm

> "The Madonna of the Carnation"
by Milanese Renaissance painter Bernardino Luini
dating to around 1515.
(2007 Christmas Stamp)
http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2007/sr07_045.htm

> "Madonna and Sleeping Child"
by Sassoferrato (Giovanni Battista Salvi) dating to
around 1640.
(2009 Christmas Stamp)
http://about.usps.com/news/national-releases/2009/pr09_088.pdf

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