

How Will You Greet The Savior?

Introduction. The most significant birth that ever occurred was that of our Savior. The arrival of the Messiah literally changed the world. People today who hold even a little respect for Jesus look back to His birth as a thing of adoration for He was the child who was born to die for our sins. But how would we have reacted to the arrival of the Savior among men if we had been alive when He was born?

A lot of us put ourselves in biblical settings with grand imaginations that we would have risen above the multitudes in unwavering faith. But even the Pharisees had an exalted idea of themselves if they had "been in the days of our fathers" (Matthew 23:30). The accounts in Matthew and Luke demonstrate the varied reactions to the newly-arrived Messiah and may be just the "mirror" we need to see ourselves. Let's look at those who greeted the Savior.

I. ***Shepherds: Honest And Humble Seekers (Luke 2:8-20)***

- A. God sent His angelic messengers, not to Augustus, Herod, or the chief priests, not to the rich and powerful, but to lowly shepherds. The revelation of God evoked action in this audience of honest and humble men. They eagerly went to the Lord and immediately began spreading the good news. Though Jesus grew in every way (Luke 2:52), He never outgrew the audiences of simple and sincere people. His followers were largely the poor peasants so often ignored by the "religious" people of the day.
- B. The angel's pronouncement is of the greatest importance. This was a bold proclamation of the gospel in the very hour that the Lord was born. The multitude of angels proclaimed the climax of the story. If we are at peace with God, then we can be at peace with each other (Romans 5:1; 14:19).
- C. As we scatter precious seed, we must be careful not to overlook the fact that God sent His angels to the poor and plain; He sends us to the same people today. The gospel first came to the social outcasts of Jesus' day, but the power of God knows no limitations (Romans 1:14-16).

II. ***Simeon: One Who Would Not Rest Until He Found The Christ (Luke 2:25-35)***

- A. There is a great description of the single-minded purpose of Simeon's life (vs. 25). When so many in Israel would misinterpret Jesus' coming, this man looked forward to the Messiah. God assured him that he would live to see the Christ (vs. 26). Only

when that divine promise was fulfilled at the temple was Simeon able to "depart in peace" (vs. 29).

- B. When Simeon made his proclamation, he did not say that he had seen the Messiah, but that his eyes have seen God's salvation. The gospel of Christ would have and still has a universal application (Romans 1:16). He predicts that because of this child, many in Israel would face a moral decision, some to a point of collapse and others to what could be called a resurrection.
- C. Simeon's attitude is reflected in the faces of those who will not stop short of the truth (John 8:32; Proverbs 23:23). The Simeons of all ages realize that life without Christ is incomplete. The Spirit's words to Simeon is echoed by Jesus to other seekers (Matthew 7:7-8).

III. ***Anna: Devoted Servant Who Shared The News (Luke 2:36-38)***

- A. One of the sweetest images on earth is that of Anna. She was an aged saint whose life had been devoted to the service of God. Hours spent at the feet or alongside the beds of affliction of such soldiers are never wasted, for we see even in the face of death the grace and character molded through long years of dedication and submission to the Master.
- B. Anna was such a servant, but her tour of duty on this earth had not yet reached its end. It was not her manner to retire to a place of ease while someone younger took over, but even at her advanced age she gave thanks to the Lord (vs. 38). From Anna we learn to pursue a life of tireless service as a people who truly love to tell the old, old story.

IV. ***The Wise Men: Seekers From Afar (Matthew 2:1-12)***

- A. Whether because of the mysteries surrounding the men or the unique means by which they were drawn to Christ, the wise men are among the most intriguing of those who greeted the Savior. Our closest view of this order of men is probably to be found in Daniel, where the astrologers and sorcerers were put to shame when compared to those who trust was in genuine revelation from God. Apparently, these men came to Jerusalem spurred on by astrological calculations.
- B. The wise men looked to nature and God pointed them to Christ. Without the revelation of the word of God, these men could not quite reach the King who had been born to save men. Other passages demonstrate the wisdom of the Lord in bringing men from "afar" to the full revelation of truth (Acts 17:24-31). Matthew does not condemn nor sanction their "astrology," but rather

contrasts the eagerness of the wise men to worship Jesus with the apathy of the Jewish leaders and the hostility of Herod.

- C. When placed alongside the others who came to Christ, it is clear that the wise men had a great distance to come to reach Christ (both geographically and religiously). The same contrasts are apparent today. Some of those we encounter are relatively close in that they already believe in God and acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures. Others are further away, unsure about the Bible and even the existence of God. Some, like the wise men, appear content with inadequate and empty religious systems. It is our job to offer to all these people an avenue from where they are to Christ.

V. ***Herod: One Who Would Not Yield (Matthew 2:3-18)***

- A. Renowned for his violence and paranoia, Herod was troubled at the news of the Christ (vs. 3). Herod feigned a desire to worship and honor Jesus (vs. 8), even though he was anxious at the thought of yielding power to another. His hypocritical humility deceived the wise men. Herod eventually displayed his true colors when he made a full-scale attempt to destroy Jesus (vs. 16).
- B. Herod is, in many respects, a well-polished mirror of the attitudes of many toward Christ. He is typical of those who are troubled by the gospel, uneasy about anything that would require them to change. Instead of viewing Jesus as the Savior who can lead them to liberty and glory, they see him as a threat who will dethrone them from proud positions in life. Just as Herod sought to kill Jesus, such people today drive nails into his hands by treating his sacrifice as useless and vain (Hebrews 6:6; 10:28-29).

VI. ***The Multitude: Indifferent Toward Jesus***

- A. There were others who had opportunity to greet Jesus -- those who walked past as Joseph and Mary made their way to the temple in Jerusalem; those who lived in the same neighborhood where Jesus grew up; even His relatives who traveled in the same company on those treks to Jerusalem for the feasts. The vast multitude who thus encountered Jesus simply passed Him by without notice.
- B. To them, He was just the carpenter's son from up the street. His presence, which had the power to draw meaning from their mangled lives, was treated as ordinary and insignificant. Is the multitude of our time any better? Is Jesus allowed the opportunity to transform the lives of men and women, or is He passed by with hardly a moment's serious consideration?

Conclusion. We did not live in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. We did not hear the voices of the heavenly host or the outcry of the mothers whose babies were slaughtered. We did not see His star in the East, nor hear the arresting words of Simeon. Yet we must determine how we will greet the Savior. Will it be as the humble shepherd? As Simeon the seeker? As devoted Anna? As the wise men who were satisfied only when they reached Christ? Or, will our greeting be like the paranoid and threatened salutation of Herod, or the apathetic disregard of the populace? How will you greet the Savior?