

Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further
International Bible Lessons

Luke 2:8-20

Sunday, December 25, 2016

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be *the answers* to the discussion questions. These indeed are “hints” a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class. The *Class Preparation Guide* includes the questions below, and it can be given to students at the end of the previous class so they can pray, read, and think ahead to prepare for the next week’s Bible class.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What were the shepherds doing when the angels appeared to them?

The shepherds were responsibly caring for sheep (that might have belonged to others, if they were hired hands or the youngest members of a family, as was David). They were doing their jobs as directed. They were caring for helpless animals that needed caring for and were valuable to their owners. They may have been enjoying the beauty of God’s good creation and thinking about the glory of God as David did when he was a shepherd in the fields writing many of his psalms. They were not sleeping or irresponsible.

2. What possible reasons can you think of for God sending angels these shepherds on the day Jesus was born instead of to others in Bethlehem or in the region?

They were responsible caregivers, who like David might have been spiritually close to God. God might have wanted to show that the “good news” of Jesus’ birth was for “all people,” including the poor. God knows the hearts of people and who is best prepared to learn more about Him. Jesus came as the Good Shepherd to lay down His life for His sheep, so that may have been a reason God sent the angels to shepherds instead of others in the city of David.

3. If an angel appeared to you unexpectedly in the quiet of the night, how would you feel?

Probably terrified; not knowing what to do or say. I would want to be certain the angel was real and sent by the true God by making sure the angel came and did and spoke

consistently with the Bible's teachings, and that the angel did not ask me to do anything contrary to the revealed character and commands of God as revealed in the Bible and the life and teachings of Jesus the Messiah, Lord, and Savior. In Galatians 1:8, Paul wrote, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!"

4. Read Luke 2:10-11 again. What truths did the angel share with them to help them overcome their feelings of terror at seeing him?

The angel said, "Do not be afraid;" rather than try to use fear to manipulate or motivate the behavior of the shepherds. He said he had "good news" to share; news that was of "great joy;" news that was for everyone; so, there was no reason to fear him. He told them that the Messiah they had been expecting according to the Scriptures had been born, and the Messiah was their Lord and their Savior.

5. If you had been one of the shepherds, what would you have done after the angels' appearance? Give some reasons for your answer.

I would have believed them and gone where they said I could find Jesus. After doing this, I would have a firsthand account or testimony that I could share as a sign that God's promised Messiah had been born as the angels had said. I would have praised and thanked God, and I could not have kept this good news quiet.

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