

Merry Christmas!

IMA Video Connect every 3rd Thursday of each month at 10AM Central Time. Contact IMA Home Office for more info.



To post events in the IMA Newsletter, please send info to IMA Home Office two months prior.

Comments, suggestions, or article submissions may be addressed to:

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"The Greatest Miracle"

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national humility (which many consider to be the pinnacle of Pauline literature). Spurgeon comments "Our highest thoughts cannot comprehend the height from which He came. The depth to which He descended is immeasurably below any point we have ever reached, and the height from which He came is inconceivably above our loftiest thought." Score: 10/10, Final Tally: 30/30.

It's in the Incarnation that we see the first glimmer of light breaking forth into darkness (Isaiah 9:2); a light that will not and cannot be extinguished (John 1:5); a light that will burn brighter and brighter until every nation walks in its light (Isaiah 60:3). Let us this Christmas Season allow our souls to be drawn up into the wonder and majesty of this, the greatest miracle of all.

Quotable Quotes

"The giving of gifts is not something man invented. God started the giving spree when He gave a gift beyond words, the indescribable gift of His Son."
~ Robert Flatt

"We are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmastime."
~ Laura Ingalls Wilder

"Who can add to Christmas? The perfect motive is that God so loved the world. The perfect gift is that He gave His only Son. The only requirement is to believe in Him. The reward of faith is that you shall have everlasting life."
~ Corrie Ten Boom

"Christmas is a season not only of rejoicing but of reflection."
~ Winston Churchill

NOTICE:

Rev. James Robert Underwood, an IMA minister from the Mid-Central District, passed away on September 1, 2022; [12/09/1944—09/01/2022]. Bro. Jim was Ordained in June of 1991, at the Mid-Central District Conference.

He served faithfully in the Outreach ministry of Dallas Pentecostal Church, serving in the food pantry outreach and in the addiction recovery ministry. Bro Jim will be missed by his wife, Jane, 6 children, 13 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren, 3 sisters, 1 aunt and a host of other family members and friends.

His Memorial Service was held at Dallas Pentecostal Church on October 1, 2022.

Relational

Actional

Missional

DECEMBER 2022

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The Greatest Miracle

By Rev. Matt Bell; Destiny Church



If we were to poll our congregations to ask them "What is the greatest miracle in the Bible?" We no doubt would receive a variable bouquet of responses. I suspect a majority would say Christ's resurrection, followed by a combination of the parting of the Red Sea, Peter walking on water, and Jonah being swallowed by the great fish. All of those are fantastic miracles. However, as we head into this Christmas Season, I would submit to you that the incarnation of our Lord is the greatest miracle of all.

To aid in making my case, I've devised a very scientific (and totally unbiased) method of ranking the greatness of Biblical miracles according to three categories: 1) The miracle's disruption of the laws of nature, 2) Its impact or aftermath, and 3) The conditions that made it possible. Unfortunately, in the small space provided, I'm not able to rank other miracles to see how they fare. You'll have to work those out on your own.

So firstly, the disruption of the laws of nature. Not only do we have

the virgin birth (!), but even beyond that, the baby in the virgin's womb is Emmanuel, God with us! God adding to His divinity, humanity. This not only supersedes the laws of nature, it's bending the fabric of the universe. With Mary we exclaim, "How can these things be?!" Score: 10/10.

Second, it's impact. Now, some would argue, and understandably so, that Christ's resurrection has a greater impact than His incarnation. However, to that I would say that there would be no resurrection without the incarnation, and that the cross and resurrection were baked into the incarnation. It was the predetermined plan of God, long before Gabriel ever spoke to the virgin from Nazareth (Acts 2:23). This is why He came. Score: 10/10.

Finally, what made the incarnation possible, was the unmatched humility of Christ. The vast seas of God's image bearers lay in darkness, with no hope of redemption. Until the Lord of glory, left Heaven's throne, exchanging it for a manger. Phil. 2:4-11 describes Christ's incar-

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Include the Youth!

By Pastor Dan Slater; Shell Lake Full Gospel Church

In my twenty-five years as a youth pastor at Shell Lake Full Gospel, I have witnessed many changes in the culture of young adults. They are very drawn and influenced by trends, styles and current events, things that can change almost monthly. It's all a part of them finding themselves and their identity as a person on this earth. Youth ministry is much more difficult, in my opinion, than adult ministry due to the fact that there's so many influencers in a young adult's life. They struggle with the ability to be steadfast in their identity. Why? Because they're still trying to learn it.

They must have their own faith. They must have an experience with the Holy Spirit and they must know God's Word. Most importantly, they must have a surrendered will. In today's culture of self entitlement, self love, and narcissism, the surrendered will is the most difficult in my opinion. If we can get a young adult to experience the Holy Spirit, a personal faith and life in



God's Word, it will start breaking down the walls of non-surrender.

We should not withhold anything from our young adults. What I mean by this is they should be in the mix of everything that's happening in the church. They should have the opportunity to pray for people, lay hands on people, prophesy; we should give them an open platform to do it. The safest place to learn God's voice is amongst seasoned believers. However, those believers need to be willing to let young adults make mistakes. Then be willing to coach them in a way that edifies them. Also, include youth in your Christmas celebrations, services, and events.



I love to train young adults to minister and then make sure they succeed. I give them praise for being a willing vessel and instruct if needed. I think sometimes we don't take time to see the potential and giftings of our young adults. We could set up ministry opportunities for them so they can succeed. This is where a lot of young adults pull away from the calling that God has on them. Why? Because they have struggled or even failed and no one was there to walk them through that failure.

We must look past language, trend, and culture, and see deep into a young adult's heart. Recognize the calling that God has on their life. I remember the first time I saw a speaker on the stage in skinny jeans delivering God's Word. I will admit, I had a hard time receiving from him at first, but then I recognized that this man was anointed and God was using him to bring the truth of the gospel to the world.

I am no longer the youth pastor here at SLFG Church. I handed that mantle over to Shari Sheehan six years ago; it was God's timing. However, my heart still longs to be with young adults and I'm so thankful that Shari allows me to volunteer in our youth ministry. I was losing the ability to see past some of the things that are happening in today's culture. What I have not lost is a love for young people. I desire to see them on a path with Jesus, and desire to train them. Shari is able to understand and communicate to the culture of the

young adults we have today. I rely on her to help me navigate those differences. We must be willing to train the young. It tells us to in Titus 2; we must be humble enough to promote them (1 Timothy 4:12).

This is the perspective of our youth pastor, Shari Sheehan:

"The thought of reaching the younger generation can feel overwhelming at times. The struggles teenagers face today feel a lot different than twenty or thirty years ago. However, their core needs haven't changed. Every teen is asking the same questions. Who am I? Where do I fit in? Is there something meaningful for me to do? Thankfully, the Word of God still speaks to these core questions and offers true identity, belonging and purpose through following Christ. The Gospel is still the most necessary and relevant truth we can offer teens. Pastors can play a significant role in students spiritual lives by investing in youth leaders. That investment could look like having conversations and brain-storming together; sending your youth leader to a conferences that helps equip them to reach the younger generation; reading books to get educated on the issues teens face and helping hold youth leaders accountable to their own development as spiritual leaders."

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What the Shepherds Saw

By Dr. Timothy L. Warner; IMA National Board



One of the most read and beloved passages of Scripture relating to the Christmas Story is the account of the angels announcing Jesus' birth to the shepherds. As Mary and Joseph alone welcomed the birth of Baby Jesus in a secluded stable in Bethlehem, heaven had the privilege of announcing Christ's birth to mankind. Jesus was the Son of God; wouldn't it have been fitting for godly, religious people to be the first to receive the news of Jesus' birth? Jesus was the King of Kings; how appropriate would it have been for the announcement of Jesus' birth to be given to the kings of the earth before the "common people" heard the news? Jesus was born to a fairly well-off family who had their own carpentry business; wouldn't it have been customary for family, friends, or business associates to hear the wonderful news right away? However, God bypassed all of these possibilities and delivered the great news of His Son's birth to a group of shepherds.



Who Were the Shepherds?

Shepherds, as we well know, watched over the sheep. This was an ordinary occupation in Israel. Shepherds provided care and protection for the flocks of sheep. Their work was repetitive, and at times challenging due to natural hardships. There were dangers of the wild, exposure to extreme temperatures, and they had to be on constant look out for dangerous predators like lions, bears, and wolves. Shepherds were responsible not only for the sheep's protection and physical care, but they had to lead their sheep to fresh water and continually find lush, green pastures in which the sheep could feed.

What Were the Shepherds Doing?

The shepherds were watching over their flocks by night. We see their diligence to their primary responsibility. Despite the time of day and cold night air that was no doubt present in the desert-like climate, these shepherds were expected to care for their sheep; and they were. What a tremendous testimony to have a moment of one's life highlighted forever in Scripture and be found doing exactly what you should have been doing! They were on guard, alert, and ready to defend their flock from beasts of the field. It is no wonder that God/Christ is often portrayed as a shepherd who watches over His sheep (a type of His people).

What Did They Experience?

Bright lights filled the sky as glorious angels made their way from heaven to earth. Reflecting the glory of God Himself, these heavenly messengers drew near to the shepherds. Then a glorious sound from the mouths of angels burst forth to proclaim "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people!" The surprise arrival of the angels combined with the fact that their "guests" were from heaven, was certainly a visit like no other! Nothing could have prepared them for such an unexpected encounter. The shepherds would never be the same!

What Was the Angel's Message?

The message from the angels to the shepherds was clear:

- Do not be afraid;
- I bring you good tidings of great joy for all people;
- Unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord;
- You will find Him wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.

Then they gave glory to God and praised Him! We don't know exactly how they did this, but I would guess this was no quiet, mellow affair! No doubt, the whole field was pierced with the joyous tidings of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"



How Did the Shepherds Respond?

The shepherds said to each other, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15).

- They quickly did what the angels said to do.
- They recognized the word was from the Lord.
- They believed the word even before they witnessed Jesus with their own eyes.

The shepherds found Mary, Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger, just as the angel had said. After they saw Jesus, they told everyone! God had a purpose for the shepherds, and He has a purpose for each of us as well. We are presented with the good news of Christ's birth during the Christmas Season. Let's be diligent to spread the word to everyone we meet!