

Night of Wonder – Christmas Eve 2023

If you brought your Bible, turn with me to Luke 2. It's one of the passages I want you to see in the next few minutes, to highlight the *wonder* that this night represents. Christmas Eve was a night of wonder. And still is. A night of amazement. A night of awe.

And those who first took part didn't know the half of it. Those who experienced the *first* Christmas eve. They didn't realize all the implications *then*, and they didn't realize what it meant for the future. They couldn't have.

But *we* can. We have the benefit of hindsight. We have the Bible. A *written* account of it all. And the *reason* for it all. Wonder preserved.

And yet we *still* miss it. *Still* fail to appreciate it. It's either completely lost on us, or we just don't care. It doesn't grip us. We think about it once a year and that's it.

If that's you, I hope to change that tonight. Like when Becky showed some of our grandsons what they might get for Christmas. *Up* to that point they didn't really get it. But when she showed them a few boxes on Facetime, their eyes got big as saucers. And one of them said, "I want to come to 'you's' house right now." And another, not realizing they live several hours away, said, "I'll go get my shoes." They were *filled* with wonder.

That's how I hope *you* are before you leave tonight. Instead of being *bored* with another go around, another Christmas Eve, I hope you see it like a kid. I hope you're *filled* with wonder, on this *night* of wonder.

Because when you get right down to it . . .

1. Heaven came to earth (Luke 2:8-14)

Heaven came to earth on Christmas Eve. Heaven came down. First in the angels and then in Jesus.

Luke 2:8 says – *There were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.* (ESV; Lk 2:8b-9) It was a piece of heaven. Because that's where angels come from.

And so was the *glory of the Lord* that shone around them. The terrifying glow of his greatness. That too was a piece of heaven.

Then, after the angel delivered his message, **v13** says – *[13] And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host [a multitude of angels] praising God and saying, [14] "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"* It wasn't just *one* angel that came to earth, but a multitude. A *host* of heaven.*****

Let that sink in. Far from just another *night*; far from just a strange *earthly* phenomenon; it was a piece of heaven. With enough glory for everybody on earth. So that we can say like the old hymn writer, "Heaven came down and glory filled my soul."

Have you ever thought about Christmas that way? Has the glory and wonder of it all filled you with praise like the angels? "Glory to God in the highest? Gloria in excelsis Deo."

Sing it with me. **Angels We Have Heard On High** . . .

Heaven came to earth. Glory to God. May it fill your soul with wonder, and never wane.

2. God became flesh (John 1:14)

Christmas Eve was a night of wonder because *God* came to earth. In the flesh. It's our *theme* for Christmas, and the *epitome* of Christmas. God actually became man.

It's found all *over* the New Testament, and stated explicitly in **John 1:14** – *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The Word became flesh. The *Word* referring to God. The second person of the Trinity. The one who was *with* God and *was* God the Bible says (Jn 1:1).

He became man. He took on flesh. The all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present God of the universe became finite. The powerful became weak. The exalted became lowly. The Son became a servant.*****

We have a hard time humbling ourselves and serving our *wives*. Serving our co-workers. Serving one another. And yet the God of the universe came to serve *us*.

Thinking some things are *below* us, we struggle with getting our *hands* dirty. Or getting "involved." Meanwhile, Jesus got so involved that he became flesh and *dwelt* among us. Eventually bearing our sins.

Take a look at this video. (God Became Flesh)

Christmas Eve is a night of wonder because God became flesh.

Third . . .

3. Light dispelled darkness (Isaiah 9:2,6)

Dispersed it. Drove it out. Put it to flight.

When Jesus was born, he not only fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 7, that *the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel* (14), meaning "God with us;" but he fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 9 as well. That a light would dawn on those who *walked in darkness*. A great light it says (2). (**Is 9:6**) *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.*

In other words, the son, born of a virgin, is the light God promised to overcome the darkness. (Light Candle)

Christmas Eve is a night of wonder, because it was on this night that light dispelled darkness. The darkness of our world and the darkness of our soul. The darkness of our sin. And blindness. And hopelessness.*****

Christmas Eve was the dawning of a new day. When holiness replaced wickedness. Righteousness replaced sinfulness. Awareness replaced blindness. Hope replaced hopelessness.

We sing about it all the time at Christmas and we don't even realize it. "Silent night, holy night; all is calm, all is *bright*." Why? Because Jesus is the light that replaced the darkness. Then *and* now.

Or how about the **third verse**? "Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure *light*. Radiant *beams* from Thy holy face; with the *dawn* of redeeming grace."

Christmas Eve is a night of wonder because it's on this night that sin gave way to righteousness, and doom gave way to hope. The night the light of *life* dawned with redeeming grace. I hope you never sing those words the same again.*****

And last, I hope the wonder of this night dawns on your *soul*.

Because on Christmas Eve . . .

4. A Savior came to sinners (Luke 2:11)

Luke 2:11 – *For unto you* [the angel said] *is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*. (Lk 2:11) A Savior, a deliverer, who is none other than the Messiah. The Christ. The promised one of old, and Lord of all. A Savior came the angel said.

First to the shepherds and then to us. The whole world. Like the Samaritans in Sychar told the women at the well 30-some years later. (**John 4:42**) *We know that this is indeed the Savior of the world*. All of us. He came to *all* of us.

Why? Because we're all sinners and need to be saved. Saved from the consequences. The consequences of death and hell. He *came* as a Savior because we *need* a Savior.

(**Rom 3:23**) *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* the Bible says. We're all sinners and fail to measure up to God's standard of righteousness. God's glory. And the *wages* of that, the consequence, is death (Rom 6:23). Death and suffering in the Lake of Fire for all eternity (Rev 20:15).

But thanks be to God, he sent his Son to save us. *Save his people from their sins* the angel told Joseph (Mt 1:21). A Savior for sinners. Offering us forgiveness, and salvation, and life. Full and forever.*****

But you have to receive him. Just because he came doesn't mean you're saved. You have to believe in him. You have to *believe* he's your Savior. And *receive* him as Lord. Following him, and living for him, and loving him all the days of your life. (**Summary**)

Make sure you know the wonder of Christmas Eve. And worship the Wonder. The one called Wonder-ful. Let him fill your soul and make you whole on Christmas Eve and *every* eve.

Pray (Worship Team on stage; Becky on stage; Candle Lighters to the front)

Father, we're so thankful. Thankful for Christmas, thankful for life, and thankful for Jesus. Born to save the sons of earth, born to give us second birth. So receive our worship as we bask in his glory. Light of the world and light of our lives. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Candle Lighting

700 years before Christ (**Is 60:1**), the prophet Isaiah said – *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you*.

As we light our candles and remember his birth, I hope your heart glows with wonder. His wonder. Because the light of the world has come. Replacing the **darkness** (lights off) . . . with the light of *life*.

(Light Candle, Pass the flame)

Let's stand and worship. (Rob & Becky exit stage)

Sing – *O Holy Night* and *Silent Night*

Close (On stage with Becky)

From our family to yours, may you indeed sleep in heavenly peace, and have a **Merry Christmas**. You are loved. (Blow out candles; Bring up lights)